Faith Looks Forward

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[0:00] Welcome to Built on God's Word, the preaching and teaching ministry of Highland Park Baptist Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.! Pastor Mike Scrivani preaches on Hebrews 11, verses 8-16.

Hebrews 11, verses 8-16. If you would please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together. Hebrews 11, verses 8-16.
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[2:28] Hebrews 11, verses 9-16. Hebrews 11, verses 9-16. Hebrews 11, verses 9-16. reminded me of home. For instance, almost everyone there spoke English, and almost everything was written in English. About a block away from our hotel was a McDonald's. These people spoke my language, and they shared my appetites. Additionally, one of the Latvian pastors I met wore a Seattle Seahawks hat. I'm not a Seahawks fan, but that hat served as a way for me to make a connection with him. We started talking about American football. I told him, my new pastor friend, that I was a Chiefs fan. And I asked him, why are you a Seahawks fan? He told me, well,

I was given the hat by another pastor who has visited here before. And so he asked me, why are you a Chiefs fan? Now, this was before Patrick Mahomes in the recent decade of dominance of the Kansas City Chiefs, a time when people would wonder, why would anyone be a Chiefs fan? And so I told him, I grew up in Kansas and not far from where the Chiefs play. At that point, the conversation turned to where it eventually always seems to turn for anyone from Kansas who is traveling out of the state, which is the Wizard of Oz. My friend said, Kansas. And he placed his hand on my shoulder and he said, well, Dorothy, you are not in Kansas anymore. There I was nearly 5,000 miles away from Kansas on another continent, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean with about 80 years of separation between when that conversation took place and when the Wizard of Oz originally premiered in theaters, explaining to this Latvian pastor that the Kansas I grew up in is nothing like the Kansas portrayed in the Wizard of Oz. But as the week went on, and I longed to be with my family, like Dorothy I concurred, there's no place like home.
One thing I've learned that helps me maintain a good attitude, a positive attitude during long stretches of travel, especially travel back home, is to imagine myself where I'm at as if I'm already there. Looking forward to my home and being with those who I love helps me in the present to endure TSA check-ins, being crammed in the middle seat of airlines, and keep my eyes off of the ETA on the navigation screen of my car. We may love our earthly homes, but in the Bible, God tells us that this world is not our home. Philippians 3.20 says, but our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus promised His disciples in John 14, 2 through 3, in my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. In Revelation 21, John shares a vision of our eternal home, a magnificent city where we will one day in Christ dwell in glorified bodies with our risen Savior. Revelation 21, 1 through 4 says, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. Scripture tells us that this world is not truly our home.

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that Jesus has prepared a better home for us, and we have the description of it in Revelation 21, the description of what it will be like. But it's hard to imagine yourself in a place where you've never been.
[7:58] This world is what we know. It's what we're familiar with, at least as far as our physical senses can perceive. And because of that, most people live their lives based on what they can see, what they can physically see.

But the Lord commands those who follow Him to live differently, to live by faith, to trust in Him for what they cannot see.
Think about it. We have never physically seen God, or Jesus Christ His Son, or heaven, or hell, or the Holy Spirit.
We have never seen the men who the Holy Spirit inspired to write God's Word. But we do see the results.
In Christ, we have experienced the new birth, the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and in the lives of other believers, in His testimony to us that we are children of God, and heirs of His promises.
[9:17] So as Christians, we live by faith. That has always been the case for the people of God. Living in the present, looking forward to the future fulfillment of God's promises, convinced, assured, convicted that one day our faith will be sight.

That is the encouragement, the truth, the reality that the writer of Hebrews gives to his readers in Hebrews chapter 11, to cling to Christ, to keep their eyes on Him, and to endure their present looking forward to their glorious future with Jesus in their eternal home.
This encouragement, again, this exhortation, this summons to live by faith in our text this morning comes right after a warning against falling away from Christ in Hebrews chapter 10, verses 19 through 31.
There the writer of Hebrews urges his readers to not throw away their boldness, but continue to trust in Jesus, continue to endure the persecution they face for their faith in Christ, and not to shrink back, but to press on, to press forward in faith.
In Hebrews 11, verse 1, the writer of Hebrews defines what faith is. Again, there he says, now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
[11:00] It's this kind of life, living by faith, that we read in Hebrews 11, that pleases God, because it testifies to His faithfulness, it testifies to His goodness, His rightness, the blessedness of our Lord, who is worthy of our faith as exemplified in the lives of those who came before us.

Beginning in verse 4 of chapter 11, the writer of Hebrews begins setting before his readers example, after example of men and women who lived by faith.
They trusted God. They believed His Word, and their faith was active and responsive, as we saw a couple of weeks ago.
By faith, Abel worshipped God. It was active. He gave His first and His best to the Lord. By faith, Enoch walked with God during a time when his culture drifted away and turned away from God.
By faith, we saw Noah worked for the Lord, constructing an ark, and was saved as a result of his faith in God, his trust in His Word, which was put forth into action as he constructed the ark and was saved from the waters of God's judgment.
[12:24] In life and death and judgment, the righteous shall live by faith. In our text today, the writer of Hebrews turns his readers' attention and ours to Abraham, showing that living by faith means trusting in God for the future, however improbable that future may seem to us or to others.

So the main idea for this morning's sermon is that living by faith means trusting God for the future, convinced that, however improbable it may seem, He will keep His promises.
Living by faith means trusting God for the future, convinced that, however improbable it may seem, He will keep His promises. Again, the original recipients of this letter were Christian men and women who had converted from Judaism.
However, as we've read, some of them who confessed faith in Christ were tempted to drift away because of the persecution they endured for being identified with Christ.
They were tempted to return to what was familiar, to the familiarity of their past, and so they risked rejecting the great salvation that is found only in Jesus.
[14:04] In verses 8 through 22 of Hebrews chapter 11, the writer of Hebrews draws their attention now to Abraham, Abraham, the father of the Jewish people.

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And what he wants his original Jewish readers to realize here is that Abraham was more than the father of their race.
He is also the father of the faithful, of all those who live by faith in God. Abraham believed God and trusted in His promises even though they were not fully realized in His earthly life.
If any of the original readers of this letter believed that following Jesus meant turning their backs on Abraham or that rejecting Jesus was the way to embrace Abraham, the writer of Hebrews makes it clear here that they are woefully mistaken.
To embrace Christ Christ is to live by faith just as Abraham did. Christians today are recipients of the promise that Abraham looked forward to.
[15:20] Jesus is the offspring of Abraham through whom the nations are blessed. Most, if not all, of us this morning are not physical descendants of Abraham.

Abraham. We didn't convert from Judaism to Christianity but we do understand that Abraham is the one through whom Jesus in His humanity descended.
As the writer of Hebrews said in chapter 2 verse 16, Christians are the offspring of Abraham. The promised Messiah has come.
The Gentiles have been grafted into the vine and are part of the promises, recipients of the promises that have yet to be fulfilled.
Brother, sister, like Abraham, we have received promises from God contained in His Word.
[16:26] Promises of a better home. Promises of a resurrection. Promises of glorification.

Promises of seeing our Savior face to face. Promises of an eternal life that is untouched and unstained by sin. Promises in Christ that we will experience in their fulfillment in our future.
future. Does your life today reflect this conviction that God will fulfill His future promises to you? Or are you living more for this present place that will one day perish than that future place? Are you more concerned with your comfort than your obedience?
obedience? Do you live in fear of people or of God? Will you live by faith or will you live by sight? Our text reminds us this morning that the best way to live and truly the only way for a Christian to live is by faith.
[17:46] And I pray that the Lord encourages you in that pursuit this morning. if you're here, if you're listening at home and you have not turned to Christ, you don't believe in Him as your Lord and Savior, you haven't trusted in Him, then God has given you this day to hear His word.

And listen, friend, He has given each of us an understanding of faith. For example, you trust the pew you're sitting in to support your weight. You came in, you sat down in it convinced that it would be strong enough to hold you up.
You exercise faith every time you eat at a restaurant, trusting that people you don't know have not tampered with your food. While you may already understand faith on a basic level, it's important to recognize why God has given you this understanding.
He's brought you here to discover what true faith is and in whom you should place your trust so that you don't waste your life on earth and the eternal consequences of rejecting the truth of Jesus Christ.
I pray that God reveals this truth to you today and we are truly glad that you are here. Living by faith means trusting God for the future, convinced that however improbable it may seem, he will keep his promises.
[19:17] In our text this morning, the Holy Spirit through the writer of Hebrews reflecting on the life of Abraham continues to tell us what it means to live by faith.

The first way, the first principle of what it means to live by faith in verses 8-10 is that living by faith means intentionally acting on God's word.
Living by faith means intentionally acting on God's word. Look at verses 8-9 again in Hebrews chapter 11 with me. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance and he went out not knowing where he was going.
By faith he went to live in the land of promise as in a foreign land living in tents with Isaac and Jacob heirs with him of the same promise. So here three times in two verses we read about the intentional activity of Abraham's faith.
He goes out to a place to receive an inheritance he went out not knowing where he was going and he went to live in a land of promise as a foreigner.

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[20:40] When God called Abraham Abraham goes when God calls Abraham obeys. This event is recorded in Genesis 12 verses 1 through 4.

Now the Lord said to Abram go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you and I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. So Abraham went as the Lord had told him and Lot went with him. Abraham was 75 years old when he departed from Haran. Now if we back up a little bit in Genesis 11 the end of Genesis 11 we read there that before God called Abraham and changed his name he was a citizen of the city of Ur in the land of Chaldea which today is southern Iraq.
From scripture history and archaeological discoveries we've learned that Ur during this time of Abraham was culturally advanced as a city.
[22:01] Its people possessed a written language demonstrated mathematical sophistication demonstrated their knowledge through just the extensive educational facilities that they had and encouraged their people to be a part of yet in spite of these achievements Ur was a deeply wicked city practicing human sacrifice as part of a religion devoted to a pantheon of false gods.

Abraham was a sinful man who grew up no doubt following this idolatrous religious system but God in his grace called him out of that and promised him great things a land an offspring a nation descended from him and tremendous blessings as well.
Abraham heard God and he trusted his word and in the Greek phrase he was called as a present participle and could be translated this way when he was being called in other words as soon as Abraham understood what God was saying to him he started packing his stuff he wasn't hedging his bets he wasn't rolling the dice he believed God's word with such absolute certainty that he regarded God's future promises as virtually present again God didn't choose Abraham because he was better than everyone else and we have no indication whatsoever from scripture that God chose Abraham based on Abraham's seeking him as Isaiah 51 1-2 says listen to me you who pursue righteousness you who seek the Lord look to the rock from which you were hewn and the quarry from which you were dug look to
Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you for he was but one when I called him that I might bless him and multiply him God chose to carve Abraham out of this pagan nation and his home there to bless him to take him out of that to bless!
to Abraham Abraham listens and in listening he obeys he wouldn't have went if he didn't believe God's word Abraham was intentional to act on what God said because obedience is the fruit of faith obedience is the fruit of faith and obedience often costs us something it cost Abraham something to live by faith Martin Luther said it was hard to leave his native land which it is natural for us to love indeed love for the fatherland is numbered among the greatest virtues of the heathen furthermore it is hard to leave friends in their companionship but most of all to leave relatives and then it is clear that with his obedience of faith
[25:29] Abraham gave a supreme example of an evangelistic life because he left everything and followed the Lord and I love this part preferring the word of God to everything and loving it above everything there was a glorious element of abandon in Abraham's faith as the rest of verse 8 indicates he didn't know where he was going and even when he got there both he his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob lived in tents as foreigners in the promised land I was gone last Sunday imagine that today I returned and you saw me pull into our church parking lot in a mobile home me and my family we all get out and and

I told you all that you know we've sold everything we've bought this mobile home we've sold everything that can't fit God has called us to move south we don't know how far south we're going we're just going we're leaving today months later you all receive a postcard and the mail from me from Belize Central America telling you I'm telling you in this postcard God has promised me and my descendants the land of Belize which would be nice because Belize is beautiful I've never been there I've seen pictures I can imagine myself being there that would be great so say I'm in Belize I tell you all God has given us Belize to me and to my descendants what would you think you'd come and pay me a visit and you would see that we're still in the mobile home years later and on down the line my children live in the same mobile home my grandchildren live in the same mobile home but we all tell you that

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God has promised us to give the land of Belize to us what would you think you all are crazy I'm sure that Abraham endured the same thoughts from those who he knew and who he loved his family he left everything behind intentionally to act on God's word and even when he got to the land and lived in a tent he was with some exceptions a happy camper because as verse 10 says he was looking forward to the city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God the more Abraham knew God the more he realized that the promised land Canaan pointed to something more profound and more lasting than any location on this earth you probably heard the saying that a person can be so heavenly minded that they do no earthly good but truly it's impossible to be of any real earthly good if we aren't heavenly minded it's when we focus on the things of this world that we live and die with every little thing that goes wrong or doesn't go our way here and so that's why the apostle Paul we read in Colossians 3 2 through 3 tells us set your minds on the things that are above not on things that are on earth for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ and God like Abraham when a person is called by God to faith in Jesus Christ there should be a glorious abandon in that a desire to separate from sin to separate from old habits old lifestyles that draw us away from Jesus salvation brings separation from the world and a desire to lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely we read in Hebrews 12 1 as we look to Jesus as we look to him looking forward to him in faith he the founder and perfecter of our faith 2 Corinthians 5 17 says therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation the old has passed away behold the new has come living by faith means hearing God's word and intentionally acting on what it says no matter the cost because we are looking forward to the city that has foundations and whose builder is God in other words this city is eternal this city is permanent faith goes it responds so brother sister how can you say you are a Christian and refuse to do what God's word says for you to do how can you say you're a Christian and refuse to obey what God commands of you on another note please don't disparage your kids from missionary work [31:30] I you know as a youth pastor it would be interesting to me I'm just assuming some things here which is not always safe but when we would come back from a mission trip it would almost be like the parents were a little bit on edge what if my kid tells me that God has called them to go overseas serve him in missionary work don't disparage that be excited help them to discern God's will encourage their obedience don't discourage it and you know God may not be calling them to that he may not be calling you to pack up and move everything you have and move on the other side of this world but he is calling you to go across the street to go next door to get up out of your desk and go talk to your co-worker to talk to your teammates your classmates tell them about

Jesus tell them about what is true what you believe and the hopes that they'll be saved we are all commanded to go by our Lord and share the gospel so step out in faith brother sister living by faith means living outside of our comfort zone be intentional you know it's not wrong to pray for opportunities Lord give me these opportunities to share the gospel with you there's not anything wrong with that but some things I think we use that as a crutch well I didn't get those opportunities today nobody came to me and said hey tell me about Jesus would you we've got to be intentional creating those opportunities that we would tell people of the goodness of God to save us through Jesus Christ his son and this is the mission statement this is the focus this is the direction that we're going to as a church we exist to develop disciples of Jesus Christ who delight in him and demonstrate his goodness as we declare his gospel to our neighbors and to the nations we need to be intentional as believers to do this we need to be intentional as a church to do this so that we don't waste our time we don't lose our focus on things that are trivial that are earthly that will perish and are not eternal and so I encourage you know that mission statement and pray through that for us as a church that we will develop disciples of Jesus Christ here that we will demonstrate his goodness wherever he would have us to go that we would delight in him at all times and that we would declare his gospel to our neighbors here in our community and to the nations so now the second way second principle of what it means to live by faith through the life of Abraham we see that living by faith means believing that nothing is impossible for God living by faith means believing that nothing is impossible for God look again at verses 11 through 12 by faith Sarah herself received power to conceive even when she was past the age since she considered him faithful who one man and him as good as dead were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore John MacArthur said faith sees the invisible hears the inaudible touches the intangible and accomplishes the impossible God promised Abraham something that seemed impossible he would become the father of a great

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nation but a major obstacle remained both Abraham and his wife Sarah were advanced in age and they had not been able to have children to that point
Genesis 5 1-6 we hear Abraham bring this to God's attention after these things the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision fear not Abraham I am your shield your reward shall be very great but Abraham said O Lord God what will you give me for I continue childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus and Abraham said behold you have given me no offspring and a member of my household will be my heir and behold the word of the Lord came to him this man shall not be your heir your very own son shall be your heir and God brought him outside and he said look toward heaven number the stars if you are able to number them then he said to him so shall your offspring be verse six Abraham believed the Lord and the
[37:03] Lord counted it to him as righteousness Abraham didn't have all of the details what he did have was good enough and that was the word of his God the promise of his Lord and he believed it despite his seemingly impossible situation to carry this out Paul often quotes Genesis 5 16 in demonstration that salvation has always been based on faith not works again works obedience is the fruit of faith it is not the other way around there's something important though here for us to see about Abraham and Sarah's faith in God to give them this promised son both of them on different occasions laughed at God over this promise Genesis 17 17 and 18 2 and before they laughed at this promise they tried to take matters into their own hands

Genesis 16 tells us that Sarah gave Abraham Hagar her female servant to marry and to bear him a child so that he'd have this heir to put it very mildly this was a really really bad idea Genesis 16 1-4 says now Sarah Abraham's wife had born him no children she had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar and Sarah said to Abraham behold now the Lord has prevented me from bearing children go into my servant it may be that I shall obtain children by her and Abraham listened to the voice of Sarah so after Abraham had lived ten years in the land of Canaan Sarai Abraham's wife took Hagar the
Egyptian her servant and gave her to Abraham her husband as a wife and he went into Hagar and she conceived and when she saw that she had conceived she looked with contempt on her mistress if you think that your family has problems in drama just read the Bible what I want to point out here through all of this is God's grace even in this mess that Abraham and Sarah created with effects that go on to this day in the Middle East and elsewhere God was gracious to keep his promise to these messy people and Sarah received power to conceive trusting that God would keep his promise despite her physical limitations and the seeming impossibility of it all and despite her sinful choices so a lesson for us to learn here is that nothing is impossible for
God his will will be done but this also teaches us the importance of being patient God commands us to go and sometimes when we get there the best thing that we should do is wait ultimately the miraculous birth here between Abraham and Sarah the birth of Isaac ultimately that miraculous birth foreshadowed a better one the birth of the offspring of Abraham through whom the nations would be blessed in Luke chapter 1 verses 26 through 33 the angel Gabriel appears to a virgin named Mary and he informs her that she has been chosen by God to bear a son whose name will be Jesus he tells her that he will be great he will be the son of God the son of the most high in verse 34 Mary asks how can this be and the way she phrased that question wasn't it doesn't communicate that she doubted or disbelieved but she wondered I believe but how can this be and so verse 35 through 38 record Gabriel's answer the angel answered her the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you therefore the child to be born will be called holy the son of God and behold your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son and this is the sixth month with her who is called barren verse 37 for nothing will be impossible with God
[42:43] Mary said behold I am the servant of the Lord let it be to me according to your word and the angel departed from her despite despite the sin of God's people recorded all throughout the Old Testament despite their expulsion from the promised land as a result of their sin God was faithful to fulfill his promise the Savior Savior came born of a virgin as the prophet said the eternal word of God came to us to dwell amongst us and despite his rejection which led to his crucifixion the promises of God were fulfilled the will of God was not thwarted and on the third day the most impossible seemingly impossible thing happened the tomb was empty Jesus was alive and then he later ascended to heaven where he reigns today and in the hearts of his people if

God wills it he will do it no matter how impossible it may seem to you if you're not saved if you've made a mess of your life friend God can redeem it he can save you and he will change you

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beginning a good work in you that he will finish that he will complete brother sister you may have doubted or are doubting what God is doing in your life right now but take heart in this truth Philippians 1 6 and I am sure of this sure of this that he who began a good work in you when he was gracious to save you will bring it to completion on this future day the day of
Jesus Christ take heart if God wills it if God promises it it will be done it will be finished completed now the third way of what it means to live by faith living by faith means seeking your true home and identity in Christ living by faith means seeking your true home and identity in Christ verses 13 through 16 again says these all died in faith not having received the things promised but having seen them and greeted them from afar and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth for people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland if they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out they would have had opportunity to return but as it is they desire a better country that is a heavenly one therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared for them a city the child of God lives by faith in this life longing for looking toward the life to come what makes this homeland the better country worth seeking is the one who inhabits it those who inhabit this city this better country are those who identify with
Christ whose life is hidden in Christ whose life is lived for Christ who have entered through Christ the narrow way who have traversed and are traversing the narrow path who trust not in their feelings who don't care what this world has to say but in Jesus whom they know is the way the truth and the life Jesus is their home and they eagerly await his glorious appearing is that true for you are your eyes set on Christ today are you trying to keep what he's commanded you to give are you trying to stay when he's commanded you to go are you intentionally acting on his word does obedience flow from your faith do you doubt what
God can do is your identity in Jesus are you living by faith Hebrews 12 1-2 says and this is where everything is going in Hebrews chapter 11 here's the main application therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses!
[48:01] Let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely let us run with endurance the race that is set before us looking to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God let's go to the Lord in prayer with our eyes on him there's reflection questions listed there for your bulletin this is going to be a time for you to think through these questions prayerfully and my hope is that you will be encouraged as you have not maybe been before or reminded inspired whatever to live your life by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ let's go to him in prayer heavenly father there are times when when for all of us

I would say we know what it is you want us to do but we would rather be comfortable we fear losing things in this world whether it's a reputation or material possessions whatever it is Lord at times we are more afraid of losing these things than doing what you've commanded for us to do and Lord so often in this life we are distracted our eyes are taken off of you we forget that this world is not our home and instead of living as foreigners and exiles knowing we have a citizenship in your kingdom we live as if this world is it and is what we love Lord forgive us thank you for this reminder that we have in your word that encourages us to live by faith Lord thank you for these examples of those who came before whom you called and whom you promised and who obeyed and even in their obedience
Lord when they messed up and they sinned in big ways you were still gracious to forgive them and to keep your promises and Lord we are the heirs of those promises today the ones that have yet to be help us Lord to look forward to every day your coming are going to be with you and that Lord we would live our lives in this present knowing and trusting in you for the future promises that are yet to be fulfilled Lord may we be a heavenly minded people who do an earthly good that you would be glorified in our lives in our homes in our churches and everywhere that you would have us to go thank you Lord for your faithfulness to us in Jesus name we pray amen to learn more visit us in person or see the website

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