

Uncomfortable Christmas

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[0 : 00] Luke chapter 2, verses 1 through 7.

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria, and all went to be registered, each to his hometown.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? Last year on Christmas Eve, I attended a Chiefs game with my family and my sisters and their families.

[1 : 29] And this was the first time in a long time that we were all together for Christmas. And when we realized that the Chiefs would be playing on Christmas Eve, we decided that we should all get tickets, especially since one of my sisters is a teacher and she was able to get a discount on those tickets for us.

And it seemed like a great way for us to spend some quality time together. And so we purchased those tickets in October of last year.

But as the day approached and as we looked at the weather forecast, we began to rethink that decision. We knew that in Kansas in December, it can get cold.

And so we assumed that we would have to bundle up a bit, but we were not prepared, nor did we anticipate just how frigid the afternoon of December 24th, 2022 would be in Kansas City.

The high that day was 14 degrees, not 40 degrees, 14 degrees.

[2 : 49] Some people like cold weather. I don't like cold weather. I have a space heater in my office that runs nine months out of the year.

And as much as I love the Chiefs, I was willing to forfeit the money that we spent on those tickets to stay home and watch the game in the comfort of my parents' living room.

But our children and one of my brothers-in-law were determined. We bought these tickets. We're going to this game.

And so we layered up and we stuffed those hand warmers in our gloves and in our shoes and just about anywhere we could place them. And we endured the chilly misery to the bitter end.

We did not leave early. And thankfully, the Chiefs won. But I was relieved when we got back to the car and as I began to get feeling again to my numb extremities.

[3 : 58] And I was even more thankful when we got back to my parents' house and I was able to put on some comfortable clothing as I prepared to spend the rest of my Christmas break in comfort.

We like our Christmases to be comfortable, don't we? We like our Christmas plans to go as planned. A Christmas where everything and everyone is jolly and merry and bright.

But the first Christmas was anything but comfortable. And if you know God, if you know the Bible, if you know what Jesus came to do, the uncomfortableness of that first Christmas is absolutely fitting.

As we look in greater detail into our passage this morning at that first Christmas day when Jesus was born and the uncomfortable circumstances that surrounded it, our text will remind us of a timeless truth, of a timeless truth, of a theological reality, and a comforting promise.

The main idea for this morning's sermon is that God provides comfort in uncomfortable situations. God provides comfort in uncomfortable situations.

[5 : 26] Luke's simple, straightforward, unembellished language describes the most profound birth ever with the most far-reaching implications in all the history of the world.

On a night like any other night in an obscure village in Israel, unnoticed by the world, the Savior of the world entered the world.

The eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, was born. In his birth, the infinite became an infant. The eternal Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

From an uncomfortable birth to an uncomfortable death, Jesus Christ emptied himself of heaven's comforts to bring us comfort, to save and to rescue us from the eternally uncomfortable consequences of our sin and separation from God.

So maybe this morning for some of you, the thought of Christmas this year is making you feel uncomfortable.

[6 : 38] Perhaps this is the first time or yet another time where you will spend Christmas without someone that you dearly loved.

You'll be thinking about them. You'll be thinking about them. And no doubt you'll be missing them. You used to look forward to this time of year with them, but not so much anymore without them.

Maybe this morning for some of you, you're full of worry. Maybe this morning. And those worries are making you feel uncomfortable. You still have much to do.

Presents to wrap, places to go, people to see. Will the kids like what they get? Will they not throw a fit when you stuff them and you tuck them into uncomfortable clothing to capture that all-important Christmas photo?

Maybe for some of you, you've got to go back to work tomorrow. Finish some end-of-year reports or tasks.

[7 : 42] And the thought of those things is making you feel uncomfortable because you're ready to check out for the rest of the year. But for all of us, tomorrow is Monday.

And you're dreading that moment when Sunday starts feeling like Monday. I call that smunday. You know what I'm talking about?

Sometimes Sunday night, all those uncomfortable feelings, all those things that you have to do that week, they start flooding your mind. And then before you know it, the weekend is over and it's about to be Monday.

Maybe that's you this morning. Maybe for many different reasons. Just the thought of Christmas, the thought of this next week and the week afterward is making you feel uncomfortable.

And so my hope for all of us today is that God will comfort us through His Word, which records how uncomfortable that first Christmas was, but reminds us that He provides comfort in uncomfortable situations.

[8 : 54] Our text today can be divided into three scenes. Each scene depicts how uncomfortable that first Christmas was, but collectively, they portray the promise that God provides comfort in uncomfortable situations.

And so the first scene we see comes through verses 1 through 3, and that's an uncomfortable decree, an uncomfortable decree. Look again with me at verses 1 through 3.

In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria, and all went to be registered to his own town.

And so Luke begins his narrative of Jesus' birth explaining the events that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. Now, on the surface, it could appear that Caesar Augustus was responsible for that, for their going there by issuing this decree.

But as we look at the rest of Scripture and use Scripture to interpret Scripture, we see that Augustus' decree was not ordered by him on a whim, but this was something that God ordained for him to do.

[10 : 16] And if we look at Galatians 4, 4 through 5, we understand that the Bible says, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

It wasn't a coincidence that Caesar Augustus issued this decree when he did. God was and had been sovereignly orchestrating the events in the world he created, both on a grand and on a minute scale in preparation for the coming of his Son, Jesus.

It wasn't long after God saved the nation of Israel from slavery that they began worshiping idols.

And that would be a consistent problem for God's people moving forward. There were moments of national revival and restoration when God's people would forsake their idols and they would turn to him in repentance, but before long, they would slide back into idolatry and they would provoke God's wrath and judgment for that.

In those times, God would send a prophet to warn his people about the consequences of their sin. One of those prophets was Micah.

[11 : 53] The Old Testament book that bears Micah's name and contains his prophecy is a blend, a mixture of both pronouncements of judgment, but also promises for future blessing and messages of hope.

God would use the Babylonians as his instrument to discipline his people. The Babylonians would come. They would capture Israel. They would take many Israelites captive when they did that. They would deport them, many of their best and their brightest, to live in a foreign land. However, the hope of Micah's prophecy in the midst of all of this is that though this would happen, one day the ideal Jewish ruler would come.

700 years before Augustus issued this decree in Luke chapter 2, Micah's prophecy contained this promise from God in Micah chapter 5 verse 2.

But you, O Bethlehem, Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

[13 : 20] And while in exile, the Jews were finally purged of their idolatrous ways. And there they established synagogues, places of worship in their foreign communities.

And it was to many of those synagogues in these places outside of Israel that the Apostle Paul and many other Christians journeyed to when they shared the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, as they declared the scriptures to them and how they all were about Jesus.

Later on, in about 300 years before Augustus' decree, Alexander the Great had come along, and he had conquered much of that region.

And as a result of his coming, he saturated that area with Greek culture, which meant for the first time in a long time that most people spoke a common language, which was the Greek language.

So again, we see God at work in preparing for his Messiah to come, that now there's this common language that people can understand so that the gospel can spread far and wide.

[14 : 35] So when Augustus ruled, the Old Testament by this point was complete. The Jews, though still under Roman control, were permitted to return to their land.

And there was a common language, again, through which the gospel would be spread far and wide. And for the first time also in a long time, there was a relative peace throughout that region called the Pax Romana.

Also, Augustus had ordered the construction of roads that connected his vast empire, again, making it possible, this is God at work in his sovereignty, for the gospel to spread, for his missionaries to have places to travel to, roads to go on that were safe, that were connected to the rest of the world so that the gospel could be heard, shared, and believed.

In all these ways, and in many more, God sovereignly orchestrated the right time, according to his divine timetable, to send his son, Jesus Christ.

But I'm pretty sure that Joseph and Mary were oblivious to most of those things. They knew from Gabriel, the angel sent from God, that their son was the Messiah.

[16 : 02] They knew that Augustus, from his imperial seat in Rome, issued a decree that they had to obey, which meant taking a long journey towards the end of Mary's pregnancy.

Another aspect that would have added discomfort to this decree was the reason behind it, the reason why this decree was given in the first place.

Roman emperors typically ordered a census for one of two reasons. The first was for taxes.

Augustus wanted to know how many people he ruled so that he could levy the appropriate amount of taxes, or at least the appropriate amount as far as he was concerned.

The second reason for a census was to conscript or draft men into the Roman military. These men would likely be put on the front line of the battle.

They would serve as pawns on the Roman Empire's chessboard. These were men who were discardable pieces to protect the other pieces that they viewed as being more important.

[17:12] But Jews were exempt from Roman military service, so Joseph didn't have to worry about that, but still put yourself in Joseph's shoes or in Joseph's sandals.

Your wife is nine months pregnant. You've been ordered to register, which means taking a long journey to Bethlehem, all so that you can be counted and later taxed.

I would find that uncomfortable. I would find that inconvenient. Wouldn't you? But in Luke's introduction of Jesus' birth, we find reason to be comforted.

Caesar Augustus, the most powerful man in the world at that time, was God's pawn. And God put it on his heart to order this decree to fulfill the promise he made in fulfillment of his word.

No matter how uncomfortable your situation may be, no matter how uncomfortable it can be to live in this world, as Christians, we should be comforted by the truth that God is sovereignly orchestrating all things and that he's working all things together for the ultimate good.

[18:54] Romans 8, 28 through 30, one of my favorite passages of Scripture, talks just about this very thing. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good.

For those who are called according to his purpose, for those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. The uncomfortable decree that Mary and Joseph received should provide you comfort in knowing that no one operates outside of God's sovereign will and plan.

God is in control. God's will will be done. And that should bring us all comfort, especially in these days, especially in these times.

At the end of this life, at the end of this world as we know it, we are promised in Revelations 21, 4 that Jesus will dry every tear, that he will comfort us and he will do so in his way.

[20:25] He will comfort us also all these days that we live on this earth until that time in the special ways that he does to remind us that he's in control and that he loves us and he has a place prepared for us.

Christmas reminds us that God provides comfort in uncomfortable situations. So that was scene one. Now we move on to scene two.

An uncomfortable decree. Now an uncomfortable departure. Verses four and five. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth to Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem because he was of the house and lineage of David to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

Luke says that Mary and Joseph traveled up to Bethlehem, even though geographically speaking, Bethlehem is south of Nazareth, but it's an uphill journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, which is in higher elevation.

And it would have taken them about four days to make that journey. Needless to say, this was quite the hike for a pregnant woman to take.

[21:51] I've seen how miserable women can be in the last trimester of their pregnancy. And I can only imagine Mary's discomfort.

Pregnancy is hard enough. Now you have to go on a four-day camping trip and deliver your baby far away from your home and from your family.

They didn't have hospitals back then or hotels or Airbnbs to book a place to stay. Joseph and Mary had no idea where they would stay once they arrived in Bethlehem when their journey came to an end.

How many of us, if we knew a young couple and the woman was nine months pregnant and we heard that this young couple and this very pregnant wife were packing up their stuff and they were going to take a four-day journey on foot, maybe on a donkey or a mule.

how many of you would approve of that? If it was your daughter or your granddaughter or your sister and you heard them say, hey, yeah, you know, we know baby's about to be here but we really want to go.

[23:22] We need to go on this camping trip. How many of you would approve of that? I think like me, you'd probably say, you're doing what? You're going where?

For whatever reason, Mary had to accompany Joseph on this trip and it must have been very uncomfortable. But sending people on uncomfortable journeys has always been something that

God does.

It's always been a part of his playbook. If you remember in the Old Testament, God sent Abraham on a journey far from his home. As he traveled through foreign lands surrounded by strange people, Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and sent to Egypt.

Moses was sent back to Egypt after running away as a fugitive from that country. God's people then journeyed in the wilderness from Egypt when they were brought out of Egypt by God for 40 years before they took possession of the promised land.

That's just a few examples. But the supreme example of an uncomfortable departure is that of Jesus Christ, the eternal word of God, as described in Philippians chapter 2, verses 4 through 11.

[24 : 50] Let each of you not look, let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

No one has assumed a more uncomfortable position than Jesus. He left the glory of heaven behind to become human.

As a man, he fully submitted himself to the will of God the Father on his way to the cross. And there, he humbled himself by enduring the shameful of the cross, bearing the indignity and disgrace of our sin.

[26 : 36] God could have, he had the ability to, he could have provided a more more comfortable arrangements for Joseph and Mary and Bethlehem.

Jesus could have, he could have been born to a more prestigious family. He could have, at least he had the ability to turn stones into bread after he had fasted for 40 days.

He could have, he had the ability to call 10,000 angels to his aid at Gethsemane. He could have, he had the ability to come down from the cross to save himself.

But the question isn't what God could do, but what he willed to do. God's will was that though Jesus was rich, that for our sake he become poor.

When Jesus died on the cross, the only earthly possessions he had were his clothes. which they stripped him of.

[28 : 03] You know, when we're tempted to question how hard we have it or how uncomfortable our situation may be, we can't forget all that Jesus endured for us.

And we can't forget what he told us about what it would mean, what it would cost to follow him.

Matthew 16, 24-25, Jesus told his disciples, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Sounds uncomfortable, doesn't it? But whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. In John 15-20, Jesus said, remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. That sounds uncomfortable, doesn't it?

Matthew 8-20, Jesus responded to a man who wanted to follow him with these words, foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere, no place to lay his head.

God is always calling us away from what makes our sinful flesh feel comfortable. He's always seeking to use his word in conjunction with his spirit to convict us of our sin, and conform us into the image of Christ.

[29 : 48] That can be an uncomfortable process. God sometimes calls us to leave behind what is comfortable and what is familiar to serve him.

And when you do so, people who know you and people who care about you, people who love you, might question that. They might say things to you like, are you sure?

Is it safe? Have you thought about this thing or have you thought about that thing? They mean well, but obeying God often leads to uncomfortable decisions that need to be made, uncomfortable places, and situations that you'll go to and be placed in.

But, if you go, it will mean God's blessing for you one way or another. God even will reveal himself to you in special ways and his grace for you will always be sufficient.

Following Christ who endured the greatest discomfort is always the right thing to do. It's always the right thing to do and the best thing for you to do.

[31 : 22] You know, if you're afraid of, not afraid, but worried about this Christmas, feeling uncomfortable about Christmas because you're missing that loved one and you know you'll be lonely, accept that invitation from a family or a friend.

Go celebrate Christmas with them. Be in their company. God will bless you for that. If you have to go back to work this week and you don't want to, see it as an opportunity to invite someone to Christmas Eve service.

And you know how you do that? It's real simple. All you got to ask is say, hey, what are you doing for Christmas Eve? Come to our church at five o'clock. We have a worship service.

I'll have a place next to me for you. If you're worried for whatever reason about Christmas or the next couple of weeks, remember the big picture. Remember what Christ has done.

And I think when you see that big picture, those things that you're worried about that seem so big become real small in comparison. And if God is calling you to do something uncomfortable, to make some kind of uncomfortable departure, go.

[32 : 46] Go and trust God and you'll be blessed. And now the third scene, an uncomfortable delivery. So we had an uncomfortable decree, an uncomfortable departure, and now it's time for the delivery, and it was uncomfortable.

Verses six through seven. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth, and she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

Now most of us are aware of how inaccurate our Christmas pageants are. The Bible does not say where exactly the birth of Jesus took place, only that it wasn't in the inn.

we do know that whenever Joseph and Mary, or wherever they stayed, there was a manger, a feeding trough for animals, but at this time feeding troughs for animals were kept in many places, not just in stables or barns.

The angels appeared to the shepherds declaring the news of Jesus' birth, but they did not come back to that manger scene to be with Joseph and Mary.

[34 : 08] The wise men weren't there that first Christmas day either. They showed up later, and there may have been more than three of them. We say three because there was three gifts.

The Bible doesn't say how many of them that there were. Now, you could be a Grinch, you could get all bent out of shape, and you could point out all of those different inconsistencies as you watch a children's Christmas pageant, or you could shut that part of your brain off for a brief time and watch the controlled chaos of these cute little kids as they're being herded around the stage, dressed in their costumes, sharing the story of the birth of Jesus Christ.

You know, I don't know if there was a chicken in the place where Joseph and Mary stayed that night, but last week we had a chicken in our manger scene, and he was cute, and we also had dairy cows, and man, I was happy to see our dairy cows a part of that as well.

Weren't you? I did draw the line on pigs, though. I did tell Danny and Heather that Jews would not have pigs, so we can't have pigs as a part of our manger scene, because we had to keep it believable, right?

But I do think, I do think that it was most likely that Jesus was born in his stable.

[35 : 40] A tradition from the second century says that the stable was actually a cave. That's where a lot of people kept their animals, just in a cave nearby.

Either way, whether it was a stable, a cave, or some other place, we can all agree that this was not an ideal place to give birth to a child.

The point being that the accommodations for travelers in Bethlehem back there then in those days was very primitive. Surely the long journey was exhausting for Mary.

As she walked, and again maybe, doesn't say she rode a donkey, maybe she did, hopefully Joseph was smart enough to do something for her, I'm sure he did, but they were traveling uphill, again, on these dusty roads, and soon after she arrives in Bethlehem, she goes into labor.

Kent Hughes paints a vivid picture of what it might have been like for them on that first Christmas day. It's a little lengthy, but it's good, and I'm going to share it with you.

[36 : 54] On that cold day when the expectant parents arrived, nothing at all was available, and despite the urgency, no one would make room for them.

Mary gave birth to Jesus, with only Joseph attending her. Joseph probably wept as much as Mary did, seeing her pain, the stinking barnyard, their poverty, people's indifference, humiliation, and the sense of utter helplessness, feeling shame at not being able to provide for young Mary on the night of her travail.

All that would make a man either curse or cry. If we imagine Jesus was born in a freshly swept country fair stable, we miss the whole point.

It was wretched, scandalous. There was sweat, and pain, and blood, and cries as Mary reached up to the heavens for help. The earth was cold and hard beneath her.

The smell of birth mixed with the stench of manure and acrid straw made a contemptible bouquet. Trembling carpenter's hands, clumsy with fear, grasped God's son slippery with blood.

[38 : 13] The baby's limbs waving helplessly as if falling through space. His face grimacing as he gasped in the cold and his cry pierced the night.

It was clearly a leap down as if his splendor stood poised at the rim of the universe, irradiating light, and dove headlong, speeding through the stars over the Milky Way to Earth's galaxy, where he plunged into a huddle of animals.

Nothing could be lower. And you know, of all the bursts that took place that first Christmas, no child that day, I think, would have seemed to have lower prospects in life.

Poor parents, poor conditions, laid in a manger. The world wouldn't see, have seen this scene as something beautiful, but as something disgraceful.

The Son of God, the Prince of Peace, was born a pauper in impoverished circumstances. The one who asked Job, where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

[39 : 40] Tell me if you have understanding when I made clouds its garment in thick darkness its swaddling band. Now he himself was wrapped in swaddling cloths.

Emmanuel, God with us. The omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God became a baby, a real baby with real needs.

Jesus didn't make his own bottles. He didn't change his own diapers. He was God. He was human. He came into this world in the most humblest way, born in the most uncomfortable conditions.

But again, this was fitting. It was fitting for the son of man who had nowhere to lay his head. Luke 9 58.

It was fitting for the one who was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. John 1 10. It was fitting for the one who came not to be served!

[41 : 02] Through an uncomfortable decree, an uncomfortable departure, and an uncomfortable delivery, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth, veiled in Mary's flesh, was born in human flesh, lived sinlessly in the flesh, died with pierced flesh, and was resurrected in the flesh, and now lives glorified in the flesh, at the right hand of God the Father, where he lives right now, as I speak, making intercession for you, his people.

That's comforting, sinning, isn't it? Jesus endured the uncomfortable from the manger to the cross to bring you and I comfort, peace with God, that by faith in him, we have eternal life.

So what should we do with all of this? Well, I think one thing is obvious, and that's how we should adjust this morning, is to turn to Christ, and he will comfort you.

Turn to Christ, and he will comfort you. In Isaiah 40, God speaks through the prophet to his people, though the people would be judged for their sin, and they would be taken captive to a foreign land, God had good plans for great blessing for his people in the future.

Isaiah 40, 1-5 records that promise. He says, comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

[43 : 11] Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, a cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries, and this is speaking of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ. In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low. The uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

church, the Lord has come. The path has been leveled. The way to eternal life has been provided through him.

The glory of the Lord has been revealed through him. Take comfort. that first Christmas, as uncomfortable as it was, was necessary to bring you the comfort that your eternal soul desperately needs and longs for.

[44 : 43] God's promise is that he will always be there for his people. He will be there with you through every uncomfortable thing, every uncomfortable situation, no matter what is heavy on your heart or your mind this morning, no matter what is coming up in the next couple of weeks that is causing you to be afraid or worried.

Remember, he is with you. God is for you. He has a perfect plan and eternal place for you in his everlasting kingdom.

Do you know him? Take comfort. What more could you want? God has come. Jesus has made the way for you to have eternal life, salvation.

salvation. If you don't know him, you are here this morning according to his sovereign plan.

He has put you in this pew to hear this good news that you would believe. And I hope and I pray that if you don't know him, today would be the day where he opens your eyes and your heart to believe and to be saved, that you would know what Christmas is truly all about and that you will have comfort that overcomes all uncomfortable situations.

[46 : 26] I have one application question. What uncomfortable thing are you worried about this Christmas?

I just encourage you to, while we sing our song, here in a minute, as you do that, you take some time, what is it? If there's something that is bothering you, that is heavy on your heart or your mind, what is it that is worrying you?

And I hope that you'll reflect over God's word that you've just heard and think about how the birth, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus should bring you comfort to endure and to obey him.

You know, one thing I've learned as a Christian and as a pastor is that the uncomfortable thing that I don't want to do is often the thing that I must do, and it's the right thing to do.

It's the thing that God wants you to do. So I encourage you this time of year where everybody's thoughts are on Christmas, that you be the light in their darkness, and that you point them to Jesus Christ, that you have that uncomfortable conversation that is necessary in the hopes that they will know the comfort of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

[47 : 48] Will you pray with me this morning? Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you for who you are. We thank you for what you've done.

That, Lord, you are willing to descend you are willing to leave the glories, the comforts of heaven behind, to become one of us.

And not just one of us, obviously being the God-man, but being a servant. Being despised and rejected. Bearing and enduring the cross.

Suffering in our place. Bearing the wrath of the Father for the sins that we've committed. And doing it willingly knowing what it would achieve.

Our salvation. Lord, as uncomfortable as those things were for you, we're comforted by the reality that you rose on the third day.

[48 : 57] That you ascended and that you live right now to make intercession for us. That, Lord, you know us. You know what it's like to be one of us.

And that, God, no matter what's heavy on our heart or on our mind, we can always go to you and be comforted by you, by your word, by your spirit, and be reminded that as your people, we always have reason to hope.

We always have reason to find comfort because of who you are and because of what you've done for us. God, you know each person in this room.

You know what's heavy on their heart. You know what's heavy on their mind. And I pray, Lord, that as we draw an end to our time together, that you would be at work to draw their eyes, their attention, their hearts, their minds to you, that they would, again, be reminded of who you are and what you've done for them, and that they'd be comforted, and that they'd be ready to serve you and be glad and eager to do so.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.