

No Neutral Ground

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[0 : 00] John chapter 18, verse 39.

But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover.! So do you want me to release you the king of the Jews?! They cried out again, Not this man, but Barabbas.

Now Barabbas was a robber. Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him, and the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe.

They came up to him saying, Hail, king of the Jews! And struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again and said to them, See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him.

So Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, Behold the man! When the chief priests and the others saw him, they cried out, Crucify him! Crucify him!

[1 : 13] Pilate said to them, Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the son of God.

When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. He entered his headquarters and again said to Jesus, Where are you from? But Jesus gave him no answer.

So Pilate said to him, You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you? Jesus answered him, You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.

Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin. From then on, Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend.

Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar. So when Pilate heard these words, Pilate said to him, Shall I crucify your king?

[2 : 45] The chief priest answered, We have no king but Caesar. So he delivered him over to be crucified. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word.

Would you please be seated? It had been about 100 years since King David ruled a united Israel. And it had been over three years since it last reigned in the northern kingdom of Israel. And as far as King Ahab was concerned, Elijah, the prophet of God, was to blame.

But the famine was truly Ahab's fault. The Bible says that under Ahab's reign, Israel's spiritual decay reached its lowest point to date.

He promoted the worship of false idols, Baal and Asherah. And then he married Jezebel, a treacherous woman who had founded her own band of false prophets and used them to force the true prophets of God into hiding.

[4 : 00] In 1 Kings chapter 18, God commands Elijah to confront Ahab. And Ahab is not happy when he sees Elijah.

Verse 17, When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, Is it you, you troubler of Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals.

Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table.

And what follows is one of my favorite passages in Scripture. There's a showdown between God and Baal, between he who is true and he who is false, between the creator of the universe and between a God created by the minds of sinful men.

You can go back and read that story at some other time in chapter 18, but I'll give you the Cliff Notes version. God wins. And it's a decisive victory.

[5 : 26] It's not even close. God shows up in awesome power and Baal does nothing because Baal is nobody. But before this contest began, Elijah had a word for his kinsmen who had gathered on Mount Carmel to witness this confrontation.

Verse 21 records what he said to them. Elijah came near to all the people and said, How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him.

But if Baal, then follow him. And the people did not answer him a word. The people had become indecisive. They were living their lives somewhere between God and idols.

They were limping back and forth between truth and error. Their devotion to God was wishy-washy and God wasn't satisfied with such half-hearted devotion to him.

They could only serve one master. And so Elijah asks, Who's it going to be? You can't have it both ways. There's no middle ground here on which you can stand.

[6 : 43] You look silly. You look foolish as you hobble back and forth between God and your false idols. Then later in verse 26, the prophet of Baal's are described as likewise foolishly limping around the altar of their sacrifices.

They desperately plead for Baal, cutting themselves, asking him to answer their request to send fire down from heaven to consume their sacrifice.

But there is no answer. Only silence. The people were limping. The false prophets were limping. I think that these passages teach us that if you believe you can stand on middle ground between God and the world, if you think you can find meaning and worth and purpose for your life, that you think you can find your fire from someone other than God or a mixture of half-hearted devotion between God and something else, you will hobble through this life on shifting sands that cannot hold you.

That same kind of hobbling, that same kind of limping, wavering, describes Pontius Pilate in our text today. He is literally stuck between God and the world.

And as we've seen, he keeps going back and forth between the two, meeting with Jesus, the Son of God, and then going outside and meeting with the Jewish leaders.

[8 : 32] Back and forth he goes, trying to strike some kind of deal, attempting to maintain a neutral position in these proceedings. Trying to make peace between Jesus and his accusers, between God and the world.

And the truth we see in this passage is that it's impossible to maintain such a position. The main idea is this, for this sermon, Pilate wrongly presumes that he can maintain a neutral position between God and the world.

Pilate wrongly presumes that he can maintain a neutral position between God and the world. These verses then record four foolish attempts by Pilate to take a neutral position between Jesus, who is God in the flesh, and the Jewish leaders, who seek his death.

And you know, perhaps some of you can relate to Pilate today. You've taken a neutral position between God and the world.

And you know what? Maybe you don't even realize that. Maybe you think that God is satisfied with your half-hearted devotion to him.

[9 : 58] You think that you've left enough room for God in your life and that he's somehow content with that. But what you say and what you do and what you watch and what you listen to and what you search for on the internet, what you spend your time with may reveal that you are more devoted to the things of this world than you would like to admit.

You think you can satisfy your flesh and what it desires and satisfy God and what he desires. And so you are likewise limping through life back and forth between the two.

And maybe the world has a stronger grip on you than you would care to admit. And as the church, could it be that our diminishing numbers are a result of us trying too hard to make peace with the world by following their example instead of setting the example that they should follow?

A lack of spiritual maturity has resulted with our being tossed to and fro by the waves of woke philosophies which have put us to sleep as we seek to find some kind of neutral ground on which to stand, making the gospel less offensive, sin less sinful, and the eternal fires of hell less hot.

All in an attempt to make ourselves and our message more appealing to the world. But Jesus warned in Matthew 6, 24, no one can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

[11:59] You cannot serve God in money or you cannot serve God in mammon which is any worldly treasure. And so my prayer is that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to see the futility of living your life caught between two masters through the example of Pontius Pilate who wrongly believed that he could.

The first foolish attempt that Pilate makes is that he provides a scapegoat. Pilate provides a scapegoat. Look again at verses 39 and 40.

He speaks to the crowd and he says but you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?

They cried out again not this man but Barabbas. Barabbas was a robber. Pilate had just offered a verdict to the Jews in verse 38 where we were last week.

He had met with Jesus and he found no guilt in Jesus. He knew that Jesus was innocent and if he had integrity he would have stated his conclusion and put an end to the matter.

[13:17] But he knew that these people were out for blood and so he sought to find some middle ground to appease them and he thinks he's found it through Barabbas his scapegoat.

Now the Bible doesn't tell us much about Barabbas. Mark 15:7 reveals that Barabbas had participated in an insurrection and had committed murder.

His name means son of the father which could mean that Barabbas was the son of a Jewish rabbi. Some early scripts of Matthew's gospel refer to Barabbas as Jesus Barabbas and if that is true then Pilate's offer to the crowd would be even more spiritually loaded as he offered them the choice between Jesus the son of the rabbi or Jesus the son of God.

Whatever the case may have been Barabbas was a zealot. He was a terrorist. He sought to overthrow the Roman occupation of Judea going so far as to murder at least one person in his attempt to accomplish that.

But the Jewish leaders they didn't like people who stirred things up with the Romans because they felt that doing so would cost them their powerful position.

[14:49] And so understand that Barabbas was no friend of these Jewish leaders. But Pilate thinks he can appease them with a substitute.

And in doing so he thinks that he can spare Jesus' life. But his plan backfired. To his astonishment the people demanded the guilty Barabbas be set free and Jesus who was innocent be put to death. Now there's a couple things that we need to take away from this failed attempt by Pilate to assume a neutral position between God and the world. The first is that Pilate wrongly concluded that his clever scheme would appease the crowd that it would work.

Pilate thought that next to Barabbas Jesus looked like the appealing alternative. And if the people did choose Barabbas Pilate would look like a just and gracious man this guy is committed murder and according to the law he should die.

This guy hasn't he's innocent we let him free. So Pilate thinks he'll also look good from all of this. But what he is really doing is using the sins of Barabbas to avoid dealing with his own sins.

[16:22] Most people would look good next to Barabbas. Any of us would look good compared to someone like Adolf Hitler or Osama Bin Laden or Ted Bundy at least I hope that's the case for you.

And people like to believe that they are good enough to enter heaven and they justify that belief by using the sins of others as a sort of scapegoat for themselves.

Thinking something like this or even saying something like this well I'm not as bad as I could be. I'm not as bad as other people. I've never been convicted of a crime.

I've never spent a night in jail. I've basically been good and I've basically lived a good life. You know we hear this thought echoed at the funerals for famous people who as far as we know never professed faith in Christ but their art was so impactful and celebrated by the culture that in the eulogies given for their funerals there's talk about how they are looking down at us from above.

The world puts people in heaven based upon likability and popularity not whether or not they confess faith in Christ and bore evidence of that confession in their lives.

[18:07] But understand this the Bible says that God does not compare your goodness to others he compares it to himself and he is absolutely holy.

So Romans 3:23 says for all all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. God doesn't compare your righteousness to Hitler's he measures it next to himself and that's bad news because none of us comes close but there's good news and that's the next aspect of this failed attempt by Pilate that we need to consider.

Human scapegoats fail to cover our sins but God's scapegoat does. Leviticus 16 foreshadows the work that Jesus would accomplish on the cross and in that passage God provides instructions for the Israelites about the day of atonement.

on that day the high priest would offer a sacrifice for his sins for the sins of those in his household and then he would perform a sacrifice for the nation.

The priest was to take two male goats for an offering and he brought the goats before the Lord he cast lots between the two one to be a sacrifice and the other to be the azazel or as William Tyndale translates that word the scapegoat.

[19 : 46] The first goat would be slaughtered for the sins of the people and his blood would be used to cleanse the most holy place the tent of meeting and the altar. After that cleansing was performed the live goat was brought to the high priest and he would lay his hands on its head and he would confess over it all of the sins of the people.

All of their sins were placed on this goat's head, were attributed to this animal. And then the goat would be led out of the camp and released into the wilderness never to return.

And all of this foreshadowed Jesus' complete atonement for sin on the cross. Hebrews 4.14 tells us that Jesus is our high priest. Revelation 13.8 says that the lamb was slain from the creation of the world as a sacrifice for sins.

Jesus is our scapegoat. 2 Corinthians 5.21 says for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Our sins were laid on Christ. He bore our sins just as the scapegoat did for Israel. Isaiah 53.6 foretells Jesus' acceptance of this burden.

[21 : 09] All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Like the scapegoat once the people's sins were pronounced upon it it was considered unclean.

It was driven into the wilderness. Likewise Jesus was led outside the walls of Jerusalem to be crucified. Isaiah 53.3 and 12 say he was despised.

He was rejected by men. He poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors with those who are outside yet he bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors.

sinner. What saves you is not faith in your goodness compared to others whom you deem to be more sinful than yourself but your faith in the sinless spotless lamb of God Jesus Christ who removes your sins and clothes you with his righteousness at salvation.

don't be deceived like Pilate thinking that you can somehow use the sinfulness of others to avoid dealing with how sinful you are.

[22 : 27] You need a righteousness which only Jesus Christ can provide and you receive it again through faith in him. Repenting of your sins turning away from them and humbly!

confessing that you do not and never will be able to measure up to God's perfect standard. You can't do it. You need Christ's life.

You need his death. You need his resurrection to set you free from the burden of the consequences of your sins. You are either in Christ or you are not.

There is no middle ground. But Pilate hadn't learned that yet. And so he makes another attempt to establish a neutral position.

In verses 19 we see that Pilate presents Jesus in an unthreatening way. He presents Jesus in an unthreatening way. Look again at verses 1-5.

[23 : 27] Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him and the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. And they came up to him saying hail king of the Jews and struck him with their hands.

Pilate went out again and said to them see I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him. So Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe and Pilate and Pilate said to them behold the man.

Pilate's first attempt to find neutral ground didn't work so he comes up with a fresh strategy. He orders that Jesus be whipped believing that that will satisfy the crowd's demands to see Jesus punished and maybe evoke a little bit of sympathy for him as well.

And so in Pilate's mind he thinks they'll see Jesus beaten bloody humiliated and they'll conclude that he's no real threat after all.

That he's learned his lesson. He's no threat to you. Pilate is making that point. He's no threat to your ways. He's really no threat to any one of us at all.

[24 : 46] both Matthew and Mark's gospel state that Jesus was flogged after the sentence of crucifixion was passed but here John records it happening before.

And we can harmonize the gospels and these two beatings that Jesus endured by better understanding the various types of floggings that the Romans would administer.

They had three forms. The first was the less severe form called the fustigatio and that was for minor offenses and for misdemeanors.

We're going to teach someone a lesson. Then there was the flagellatio which was more severe and was given for those who had committed more severe crimes and then finally there was the verberatio where the victim was stripped and tied to a post and beaten with whips that were fitted with pieces of bone and lead and rocks and metals, anything that a Roman soldier as he was marching through towns would pick up off the streets and stick inside the thongs of his whip. And then the victim would literally have the flesh ripped from their bones as the whip came and hit them and stuck and as they pulled back and tore it off the body.

[26 : 15] Sometimes victims wouldn't survive that form of flogging and for those condemned to crucifixion that was the form of flogging that they used and they did so to hasten that person's death later on that day on the cross.

This beating that Pilate orders at this point is the first. very painful but less severe. But then later after Jesus is sentenced to die on the cross he endures the excruciating verberatio beating which made him so weak that he needed help to carry his cross.

But again at this point Pilate wants to maintain a neutral position by beating and humiliating Jesus in a way that presents him as a harmless threat.

And he dramatically presents Jesus as a pathetic figure swollen bruised bloodied and his statement behold the man drips with irony.

This is Pilate's mock coronation of Jesus. And he's saying in effect look here this man he's no threat he poses no danger he's no king he's a jester this is a joke.

[27 : 52] Now let's put an end to this farce and all of us let's just go home. But the crowd was not satisfied. Beginning of verse 6 says when the chief priest and the officers saw him they cried out crucify him crucify him.

Yet again Pilate's attempt failed. The chief priests are not satisfied. Jesus' death is what they demand. You know in our time Christians like Pilate have likewise attempted to win the world to Christ by seeking some kind of neutral ground presenting Jesus in unthreatening ways. It's called the seeker sensitive movement. Many seeker churches are mega churches. Collectively they boast large numbers of conversions, large amounts of resources, multiple campuses, well-known pastors who take on a form of celebrity status.

The idea behind the movement is to get as many people through the door as possible and in order to do that they give people what they want. what do they want?

Shorter sermons focused on self-improvement, worship in concert atmosphere when they worship and theatrics to make Jesus look cool.

[29 : 28] They look for what unsaved people want in a church and that's what they give to them with the thought if you build it they will come and they come but the gospel being presented to them rarely includes sin or talk about hell or the need for repentance or Jesus Christ as the exclusive and only way to heaven or about the wrath of God that he bore on the cross to atone for our sins.

in fact you won't see many if any crosses at all in the church. Why? Why don't they talk about these things? Well they deem them to be too divisive too offensive.

What people want is a God who is more like a cosmic genie who is obsessed with you and if you stroke him the right way he might just give you what you want.

Again the strategy is we can hook the unsaved the unchurched person with great entertainment easy to digest message that asks little of them and demands almost nothing.

Like Pilate those churches masquerade Jesus in an unthreatening way to entertain their crowd but they are making a mockery of him.

[31 : 07] They're making a mockery of his gospel. They're making light of who he is and what he has done and what he demands of those who follow him.

Listen to Jesus and what he says about the cost of discipleship following him in Matthew 16 24 through 25 Jesus told his disciples if anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross an instrument of death and follow me for whoever would save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

in this moment Jesus demands total commitment from his disciples even unto death and called them to surrender their lives completely to him.

That same life or death devotion to Jesus was the message that they were commanded by him to proclaim to others to the world.

Is that the message that we proclaim? Do we present Jesus as a clown who entertains or as a Christ who saves?

[32 : 29] Charles Spurgeon said if men will not come to hear us because we preach the gospel draw them by no other attractions. The people were too blind to see it but Jesus in this act of humiliation was really displaying his glory.

He endured their shame and he did so to bear the cross. He let them mock him, hit him, spit on him, degrade him.

He was willing to be humiliated so that through him God could forgive you. so let's not do what Pilate did.

Let's not be obsessed with numbers. Let's not dress Jesus up or dress Jesus down in ways that we think will appease the world but will disgrace our Savior.

Instead let's desire to win the world to Christ the king not Christ the clown. Pilate hasn't given up yet.

[33 : 40] He makes one more attempt or a third attempt and that's through playing political games. Pilate plays political games.

The rest of verse 6 through verse 8 Pilate said to them take him yourself and crucify him for I find no guilt in him. The Jews answered him we have a law and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the son of God.

Pilate heard the statement he was even more afraid. And so here Pilate says in effect you know what you bring him to me for trial but you refuse my judgment so what do you expect me to do?

Pilate's annoyance with the Jews was reaching its peak he can't find a way to get out from underneath this situation so he tries to back out of it by playing political games saying if you don't like my judgment then make your own judgment take him and go your own way see if I care maybe this was Pilate's way to try and sweep things under the rug as well you do with him what you want I'll turn turn a blind eye to it you scratch my back I'll scratch your back but the Jewish leaders didn't trust Pilate if they did crucify Jesus themselves they would have broken Roman law and they were no friends of Pilate and Pilate was no friends of theirs and they would probably be the next one to stand before him in judgment so they apply more pressure to him to do it for them and then probably using Leviticus 24 16 they tell

Pilate we've found him guilty because he's said that he is the son of God and Pilate though we've seen has already denied absolute truth he was still scared by this thought that Jesus was a divine man Matthew 27 19 records that at some point during this time and before this moment Pilate's wife sent word to him and she warned him have nothing to do with that righteous man Pilate is scared law can't save him he can't sweep the issue under the rug he can't establish that neutral ground it's crumbling underneath his feet but he's not finished trying yet he resorts to one last attempt to rescue and save himself and to stabilize the crumbling position that his feet are on Pilate pleads for peace without a cross he pleads for peace without a cross so

[36 : 34] Pilate goes back inside with Jesus again he's limping back and forth he has more questions for him and then he offers him both the threat of execution and his assistance to get him out of it what Pilate really is doing here again is seeking peace for himself peace with Jesus peace with the crowd but he can't have it both ways and in fact nobody can have it both ways Jesus said in Luke 12 51 do you think that I have come to give peace on earth no I tell you but rather division while the ultimate end of the gospel is peace with God the immediate result of the gospel is frequently conflict conversion to Christ puts one at odds with the world that rejects him Steve Lawson said if the world understands you you can be sure that you have become too much like the world is that the case for you verse 11

Jesus says to Pilate you would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given to you from above therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin so Jesus understands and

knows that behind Pilate's authority God was at work and remember that we celebrate the events that transpired on this day by calling it Good Friday and it was good because we know that God uses all things together to accomplish his good even things that look evil to us and certainly the cross is the ultimate expression of that isn't it so verse 11 may sound confusing but Jesus point is this he knew that Pilate hadn't orchestrated these proceedings

Pilate wasn't seeking Jesus's death so the greater sin fell on those who had but Pilate isn't innocent either and all sin is committed ultimately against God and though God was working behind the scenes Pilate was a willing participant in all of it it was his sin that was keeping him from doing the right thing verse 12 records Pilate limping back out to the Jews seeking to appease them but again no such luck they say if you don't do this we'll report you to your superiors and we know that you're already in hot water you're on thin ice and we know this Caesar and we know how jealous he is for loyalty from his subordinates peace

I don't think that he's going to like what we might have to say to him if you don't do this we'll make your life miserable so either you pronounce judgment on Jesus or we'll get someone who will pronounce judgment on you and so what does Pilate do his attempts to find a neutral position to offer peace without a cross have been unsuccessful he must choose and he makes a choice in verses 13 and 16 Pilate pronounces judgment on Jesus realizing he can't maintain a neutral position that ground has completely given out underneath him Pilate breaks down and who does he take sides with the world and what does he do he orders the death of

Jesus whom he knows and whom he has said multiple times is innocent but still Pilate wasn't happy about having to cave to the Jews and so in one last bit of mockery he says to them behold your king and they cried out away with him away with him crucify him Pilate said to them shall I crucify your king and the chief priest answered we have no king but Caesar Pilate!

[41 : 45] presented Jesus one last time as the king of the Jews mocking them basically making the statement you know what this bruised beaten battered bloodied man that's the kind of king that you deserve and the Jews made their position clear these were God's chosen people and they rejected God's king and instead what they did is they pledged allegiance to Caesar the most powerful man in the world at the time who was very much the king of the world at that time there's no middle ground there's no neutral position that can be taken between God and this world on this day you were either with

Jesus or you were against him and most everybody was against him there's a final day coming when he who was slain when he who was crucified when he who died but has risen again and ascended into heaven where he sits at the right hand of the father making intercessions for his people until that time comes when the father says to him it's time to go back and he will come back but this time he won't be sitting in the place of judgment you and I will be and he will be the one who judges he will separate those on his right and those on his left and you know what nobody will be in the middle there's no neutral position you're either in this category or you're in that category there is no third category and so the main application for this morning's sermon is this you are either positioned with

Jesus or against him there is no neutral ground you are either in Christ or you are not in Christ you have either entered through the narrow gate and are on the narrow path or you have entered through the wide gate and you are on the wide path that leads to destruction there's two paths there's two gates there's no third alternative you are either positioned with Jesus or you are positioned against him you know I like to wonder what happened to Barabbas you ever wonder that when you read the gospels and you read this account of Barabbas being set free you ever wonder what did he do whatever happened to Barabbas the Bible doesn't say you know maybe Barabbas can imagine he was relieved right he was going to die on a cross and

Jesus took it for him and he got to walk out of prison that day a free man maybe he went back to his life of crime maybe he eventually came to faith in Christ who spared him from dying on the cross that day we don't know God only knows let me tell you that that today Barabbas options are yours there is no neutral position to take either acknowledge what Christ has done for you and repent of your sins and turn to him in faith or you spurn that gift and you go your own way but again I warn you that that way though easy though the world will applaud you as you go on it it's end is destruction and so

I don't have an application question in your bulletin but this is it where are you positioned on Christ the solid rock or on shifting sand there is no neutral ground and that day is quickly approaching are

you prepared for it are you ready for it can you can you confidently say that I know that I'm in Christ or are you trusting in well I'm not as bad as Hitler I'm not as bad as my neighbors they drive me crazy they drive us all crazy I'm not as bad as this person or that person I'm basically a good person God doesn't compare you and your righteousness to that of others but to his self and if you think that will save you you're wrong so

[47 : 34] God what does he want you to do stop trying to seek this neutral position stop limping back and forth come to him! to receive his son as your savior as your king who endured the cross for you who bore!

the wrath of God for your sins you trust in him and you're saved you trust in him and on that day when it comes you will stand on his right and you'll be welcomed into his eternal kingdom is that where you're positioned or not let's pray heavenly father we read the account of the last day of your son's life before he was crucified on the cross and God it's heartbreaking it's heartbreaking to see how sinful men can be and the lengths that they're willing to go to put you to death you who created us you who give us life but

God so often we can read these verses and think how could they without thinking about ourselves and how often we like Pilate are found limping back and forth between wanting to be accepted and loved by this world and wanting to be accepted and loved by you thinking that we can maintain this sort of neutral position or find this neutral ground and convincing others maybe that they can do the same by watering down the gospel in fact preaching and teaching a different gospel that does not save Lord forgive us Father help us for those Lord whom we know that you have saved us may we rest assured in the position on the rock that you have placed us upon your son your word your truth God may you help us to resist temptations to to do things to try to please the world and get them into our buildings without sharing with them the truth about their sin and its consequences God for those who aren't in you but maybe they're trusting in their own goodness Lord I pray that your spirit would reveal the error of that thought and I pray in mercy Lord you would reveal to them the truth and that they would come to you acknowledging their sins confessing their inability to measure up and seeing in Christ the righteousness that they need and turning to him in faith God would you please use this word to change us and our ways that you would be glorified in our lives and we ask this in Jesus name amen