

2 Corinthians 3

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[0:00] Well, if you're joining with us for the first time, then it is our usual practice just to sort of work our way through books of the Bible. But a couple of years ago, we decided to set aside a couple of Sundays in August, really to kind of just sort of think through the church's vision.

But it's not really the church's vision. It's actually Jesus' vision for the whole of the church, not just for Cornerstone. But how we work that out in particular, the commission to go and to teach and to baptize and so on.

And so as I was sort of reflecting what might be appropriate to say this morning, in the middle of that, you know, I grew up in the Highlands, which is very much a sort of text preaching on a Sunday tradition.

And so when a sort of expository ministry preacher comes to sort of having to preach on one Sunday, it's a very stressful experience thinking, I don't know what to preach on because it's normally just all there before me.

But actually the words that came to mind, just as I was praying and thinking about this, were these words from Corinthians, that we'd be changed from one degree of glory to another. Or as it is in the NIV, this version of the NIV, with ever-increasing glory.

[1:12] And I guess so what I want to do is not so much exposit this passage, but take a sort of something, express something of my own heart.

I feel there's not often opportunities for me, you know, to kind of just speak with us as a church family, to step out behind the passages that I'm preaching on, just to talk, as it were, heart to heart. And say, what is on my own heart for us as a church family? But I guess as I sort of begin, I wonder what your answer to this question would be.

What do you want for us as a church family? What is your heart for us as a church family? And if you could sum it up in one word, what would it be?

And it would be interesting to time to have some, I'm not going to make you turn to the person around about you, because, you know, there's always guests and so on to discuss that. But it might be the sort of thing that might have been interesting to chat about over tea and coffee at the end.

[2:18] And that word will be different for different of you, because, you know, on a Sunday morning, we come from different points in a week and in our lives and seasons in our lives. Some of us are going through a very hard season.

And so the things that we might sort of immediately think of will be one thing. Other words are, you know, sort of the prime of life and things are going well and you've got another thing going, you know, would maybe come with something else.

But I wonder if I could sort of bring all of those words together, if you like. And I might be wrong in this, but I wonder if we could be absorbed in one word, in one way or another.

And it's this word, deeper. Deeper. I know the answer is supposed to be Jesus, but, you know, I wonder if it is that term, that idea, deeper.

And in a sense, that's the kind of theme that I want to speak on today. That we're deeper into the reality of the life that Christ has won for us.

[3:19] That he has redeemed us into. That he shed his blood that we'll remember later on in the service for. That one day he, that we will experience, though in part now we'll experience full on the days we were thinking about as we came to the end of our series in Revelation recently.

And in our best moments, I think that we would all sort of want, desire that for us as individuals, for us as a church family, wouldn't we?

But it's easy to keep putting it off, isn't it? Life is busy either because we're filling it with things or because, for one reason or another, it is being filled for us with things.

And so it is easy to lose track and lose focus on what God has called us into in Christ. And by, when I call about, you know, the things that Christ has called us into and deeper into these things, I mean the reality of them.

Not in a superficial way. The reality of the Christ who meets us, yes, on the mountaintops when things are going well, but also the Christ who is more than able to meet us in the valley.

[4:29] When we're going through it. On the sunny days and in the midst of the storms of life and boy, do the storms come? And they can be fierce.

It can feel that we are in deep. But the reality of Christ and the person of Christ and who he is, because of who he is, he is more than able to meet us in whatever depth we find ourselves.

That is the kind of reality that I'm talking about when I'm talking about sort of being called into and longing to walk in the deeper realities of Christ and find them in whatever season of life we are in. But there's another aspect. I think, you know, J.C. Ryle lived in the heyday of church attendance during the Victorian period. And he had a great concern for the church of his time.

You know, many people would turn up in church right across the land. But his concern was for their spiritual state because it was just easy in the culture and easy at the time to sort of pitch up in church and name the name of Christ.

[5:40] And his great concern in that setting was of spiritual complacency. That in a sense, it was easy almost just to kind of drift along, name the name of Jesus, you know, worshipping with our lips, but our hearts be far from him, as the scriptures say.

Now, we live in a very different age from that age of kind of church attendance and culture. But as churches like Cornerstone, and we are not unique, as churches like Cornerstone grow, it is easier to kind of drift along.

It is easier to kind of just be on the periphery, isn't it? Maybe not in actuality, but in our hearts. And in response to his own time, J.C. Ryle wrote what has now become a Christian classic.

And Emily sort of, her apprentice sort of mentioned that she was reading, which is going to pique me sort of having another wee look at it. He wrote a Christian classic called Holiness to counter the trend of the day.

Why did he write that? Why did he feel that was the thing that needed to be written? Well, he felt that whilst, you know, people may well have been grasping the gospel of justification by faith alone.

[6:59] They were not grasping the alongside truth of that, that saving faith, to quote Martin Luther, is never alone. That the same power of God that saves us also desires to sanctify us, transform us, change us from one degree of glory to another.

As Paul's writing here to the Corinthians. In more theological terms, though we are given in Christ that positional righteousness before God and that settled opinion of us, there is also a subsequent work that demonstrates the reality of that first work in us that is a progressive righteousness, if you like, or sanctification, or work of holiness, or godliness, or ultimately Christ-likeness.

Where we are being changed from one degree of glory to another. You know, I don't know if you listened to Sinclair Ferguson's podcast, but I think I'm in sync with it.

I may not be. But at the beginning of the week, he was talking about how modern evangelicalism has in part skipped this very idea. It's grasped well the gospel of justification by faith alone, but it's failed to grasp equally well that there's an ongoing work that evidences that of the Spirit that is a sanctifying, changing, transforming work.

And he said that it's evidenced in the kind of the way that we focus on. That the focus rather than on the heart and on character transformation that is seen, you know, in the fruit of the Spirit's work in our lives, that has been replaced with not a progressive righteousness, but an impressive giftedness, for want of a better phrase.

[8:55] Where we have venerated and given prominence to the gifted without knowing if they are godly. And when I'm saying that, you know, I'm asking those questions of myself, and you should be asking that of me also.

And of course, we, to a great sadness of heart, we know that that very issue has led to some very high-profile downfalls in evangelicalism.

Of course, Sinclair is only one voice amongst many who are warning of these things. So, you know, one of the things that we need to be on our guard for, that we need to be thinking about as we move forward in the next 10 years, is watching for that complacency in our hearts.

Things, you know, in our fellowship, on the surface are going relatively well. But also, not only complacency, if I could categorise that second thing of kind of not focusing on character, but giftedness, a kind of misplacency.

If you apologise, don't mind me butchering the English language. Maybe misplacency could be also added to the Cambridge Dictionary, along with skibidi, tradwife and delulu, which have been added in the last week.

[10:14] And by misplacency, you know what I mean. A misplaced focus away from the foundational truths that, yes, we are saved by grace alone, but it is never alone.

It is an ongoing work. Jesus is calling us forward and saying, I've got more for you. Misplaced focus. Not focusing on the more that he has, which is the fruit of the Spirit, that work in our character. It's so that we're bearing the family likeness, Christ likeness. And the trend to focus on maybe more superficial things.

And actually, it's interesting that Paul's writing to the Corinthians, and these are actually the very same issues that the Corinthians themselves were facing. They loved the great orators, didn't they? Oh, fantastic. And they would follow them. Didn't think much of the Apostle Paul, despite the fact he was an apostle anointed of the Lord. Oh, Paul, you're so good in your writings, but you're pretty unimpressive when you come to speaking.

[11:13] They were focused. It was a misplacency. Focusing on the superficial, on what the sort of mirroring the culture, rather than actually on what the Spirit was longing to draw out in them.

Christ likeness. The fruit of the Spirit. Not only complacency, but misplacency, if you like. You know what I'm saying.

I hope what I'm saying has some resonance in your heart. I want us to think a little bit seriously about the next 10 years, God willing. Where is God calling us?

To what is he calling us? I think it's to deeper in him. So how does 2 Corinthians chapter 3 help here?

There's a lot in, and it's a sort of building argument that Paul has been doing. But basically, he's been, in this chapter, helping both believers from a Jewish background and a pagan background navigate how they understand the Old Covenant and the Old Testament in the light of the New.

[12:20] But coming at it from completely different backgrounds. Basically saying, as the sort of Jewish believers were kind of mistakenly doing and leading some of the non-Jewish believers into the same error.

Saying, you know, we have the Old Testament. That is our Bible. But if you're just teaching the law, then actually you've totally missed out on the gospel of grace.

You're misplacing your focus. You're misunderstanding what the nature of the new is in comparison with the old. Basically saying, if you're just ministering the law, verses 6 and 7, it's a ministry of death.

But if you're ministering the gospel, the fulfillment of the law, then you're ministering life. And as you do that, you're letting the beauty and the glory of what Christ has purchased for us shine.

Even though there was a glory in the old, there's a greater glory in the new. And Paul does that by sort of showing the glory of the new by a series of contrasts in the passage, showing how the former glory, how it was good, the law and the promises, it was one thing.

[13:41] But the latter thing, the new that Christ brought, fulfilling the old, has an even greater glory to it. And actually the whole of the Old Testament pointed to it and anticipated its coming.

And so he says in verse 7 now, If the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in the letters on stone, came with a glory, and it did, so that Israelites could not look steadily in the face of Moses because of its glory, because this is the very words of God, the Ten Commandments, transitory though that glory was, will not the ministry of the Spirit promise through the prophets that he would write the scriptures on our heart, that he would turn our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, the ministry of the Spirit, would that not be even more glorious?

So if the ministry that brought condemnation was glory, because, you know, as he's explaining in Romans 7, that all the law did was actually condemn. If that was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that actually brings the righteousness that the law was supposed to bring?

So in summary, what he's saying is that the law had the power, to show how to be right with God, how to be righteous, to have that positional and progressive righteousness, but it lacked the power to do it.

And as he says here, it's not that there was no glory in it, these are the very words of God. Moses shone from being in the presence of God. He encountered that glorious face, literally shone with the glory.

[15:22] Verse 7, after he encountered the Lord in Sinai, I received the law. And so on in Exodus 34. But as Paul shows in Romans, we're seeing that in coming weeks, all it did was to show how far short, ultimately, we were falling of the mark that God has set for us.

That we were sinners in need of a savior. And of course, that's why the sacrificial Old Testament was there as a constant reminder of that. And ultimately, as Hebrew reminds us, pointing us forward to the great sacrifice that Christ would make for us.

And again, on a Sunday morning, we've got folks coming who are just looking into the Christian faith, which we love. And that's all that you might think, this is a bit remote, but most people who believe in something out there, a higher power and such, and believe that ultimately, we get right with that higher power by some form of works-based system to commend ourselves or please the God or gods that they believe in.

We've got to let their good works outweigh their bad works so that in the end, they will be accepted by the God or the gods. And the same is true even where people don't believe in God.

Many people who don't believe in it still work on that merit-based scheme. We construct a scheme to help validate ourselves and kind of help us feel that we matter.

[16:54] We develop schemes like, oh, you know, there are good people and there are bad people. And within that scheme, we might compare ourselves to others and think, well, I'm doing better than them so I can feel good about myself.

It might be because, you know, I have much more conservative and traditional values than them, therefore I'm a better person. Or it might be the opposite, that I'm a more progressive and much more liberal values, therefore I'm a much better person than them.

All of us, whether we're believing or not, or in some form of belief or not, have this same kind of system. Or it might be that, you know, you think, oh, I've got certain standards for myself and when I'm keeping them, you know, that's good.

But actually, we discover over time that as life goes on, our standards for ourselves slip because we can't actually keep them and so we have to kind of slightly readjust them.

And, you know, many people attending church, especially in more nominal churches, have exactly the same system that they believe that the way to get right with God is to do good works that outweigh your bad works, which is the exact opposite of the gospel, isn't it?

[18:05] Probably because they have no personal relationship with Jesus and see no real need, they don't understand their need for him. these law-based systems that Paul says are a ministry of death.

Whatever place we come from them, whether it is kind of like the Corinthians or whether it's in general society where there's, you know, or whatever, have a ministry of death that leaves folks pretty judgy of one another, in some way having to feel superior over the other person in order to kind of validate themselves, or feel dejected or inferior or condemned because they just, you know, can't even keep their own standards, let alone, you know, anybody else's.

That they bring a kind of inner death in one way or another and that's Paul's point here. And what happens as we, as the Holy Spirit gets to work in our lives, isn't it, that we wake up to these things? We think, you know, actually I realize I do need help. I was lost and I need help. I'm not able to do these things in myself. I have no idea. No one in the world that was, it seems significant enough or wise enough or has lived long enough to be able to point me to the things that will actually help me in life.

Who is great enough to construct a system that will truly help the whole of humanity? And Paul says that those kind of systems, when we hold them, you know, those systems do nothing but condemn, verse 9, and they bring death, verse 7, spiritually, physically, externally.

[19:50] But he says, you know, in verse 7, the law that God gave, it was good and it was glorious. But the ministry of the Spirit that, you know, that was promised is even more glorious.

Moses experienced the glory, verse 7, but it faded. But verse 7, how much more glorious is the ministry of the Spirit, verse 11, that is lasting, that is permanent?

And that's, you know, what Paul is trying to demonstrate. Don't follow that, don't go into that kind of old error of just focusing on the law and missing out on grace and the glory of what Christ has

purchased.

Let me cut to the chase and why I think this verse came to mind. Because here's the truth this morning, that if you're trusting in Christ today, glory, then you right now here are receiving that glory that Paul was talking about here 2,000 years ago.

You're receiving the glory that God wants for you, has for you, purchased for you. And by glory, the word glory means weight or substance.

[21:08] You're experiencing not just something superficial, but something substantial, wonderful, from God himself in your life right now. Something that Moses could only have dreamed of.

We are receiving the ministry of God himself in our lives. You know, we are involved in ministries within the fellowship.

Mine is in part in the ministry of the word. Others are in the ministry of leading us in singing, ministry with the kids, ministry of tea and coffee, ministry of welcome, in ministry of setting up and ministry, you know, through the week and so on.

But, in and through and behind and around and in spite of all that God is himself ministering by his Holy Spirit. That is a glory.

That is a wonder. That is a joy this morning. And that is our privilege that we are receiving the ministry of God himself in all his majesty and wonder and greatness.

[22:18] God is the creator of all that is, who is the sustainer of the very universe in which we live. That we are receiving the ministry of God the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit.

All of God ministering to all of us. and what is he ministering? Well, he is ministering the glory of the work of Christ on the cross again that we will gather around and remember later as we come to the table.

That gives us now what we did not have which is full and free access to the love of the Father who wants to minister his settled opinion of you to you that you are loved and that you are accepted and to know that love transforming you to know the transforming power of that love which amongst other things changes our opinion of ourselves at our deepest level that we are individuals who wonder of wonders are loved even when we find it difficult to love ourselves.

There is one who has a settled opinion of us who loves us that is the glory of what we are receiving people would give their eye teeth to know that in their lives at the very deepest level we are loved and that we are accepted we used to sing in the Christian unions back in the last century a hundred years ago an old song I'm accepted I'm forgiven I'm fathered by the true and living God there's no guilt or fear as I draw near to the saviour the creator of the world there's joy and peace as we release and so on that is some of the truth of what he is ministering to you this morning and that is a ministry that he wants us to fully grasp as we go forward and think about the next ten years together that is transforming us as individuals and the very shape of our family life our fellowship together change from one degree of glory to another that's what he's talking about the kind of thing that Paul is mentioning here when he speaks of these things but here's the reality for us so many of us put ourselves back in the dock trying again to gain God's verdict of loved and accepted trying to live kind of lives that we think that will be acceptable to him because we want to be loved by him forgetting that we are already loved by him that he has settled it on the cross and we say oh yeah but I sin

I fall short and yes yes we do but what are we to do when we're to come with godly sorrow confess yes Lord I've taken the glory of what you have given me in my life and I've just stamped on it I've spat on it again and again I see that in myself and I have sorrow over it I see just you know the deep corruption in my soul and I've tried just pulling up my britches and doing better but it's not working so I come to you asking for forgiveness I come to you asking for help by your Holy Spirit to change and I come knowing that your opinion and your banner over me unbelievably even in this moment where I'm acknowledging my great depth of my sorrow and wrong your banner over me is love because of the cross that is the glory that is being communicated the depth of it right into the stinking mess of our lives at times isn't that a wonder isn't that glorious

[26:25] I'm coming and I'm asking forgiveness and I'm asking for help to change step by step day by day moment by moment that is the power of the cross that is the glory and the wonder of a fraction of what he is ministering to us we come knowing that we are loved and so we say Lord let my love for you outweigh my love for sin and the idols of my heart and then we take action Lord what's my next steps is it deleting some stuff on your phone is it putting a blocker on your web browser is it looking at your schedule and rescheduling your priorities and saying Lord I just

neglected time with you I've been running away from fellowship with others the support and the help that I need that you've given to me as a means of grace is at the beginning of the day reminding ourselves as kind of revelation at the end of it reminds us to do is to think every day morning and evening heaven is my home and letting that very thought change our priorities and as we do that amongst other things as we receive the ministry of the Holy

Spirit as we receive the glory of what he has given to us in Christ then we will receive verse 17 what this what there's another wonderful tree we'll receive from the Spirit freedom for where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom negatively freedom from the consequences of the law condemnation and sin and death a bit more positive freedom to live the new life freed from the old the new life in Christ that he is giving to us a changed and a changing life and because that same Spirit that is at work in us is a Holy Spirit or as in Romans chapter 1 verse 4 is the Spirit of holiness the freedom that he is going to give is going to be shaped in holiness like he says like Peter says 1 Peter 1 16 quoting Leviticus be holy because that's going to be the direction the Spirit's going to take us and holiness for many years has had a bad rap but as in

Hebrews 12 14 tells us without holiness no one will see the Lord and again if you're new to all this thinking what does this word holiness mean it really just means Christ likeness being like Christ and Alexander White an old Scottish preacher once said that you know some Christians give you the impression that holiness is somehow the Spirit sanctifying with vinegar surly and stern nothing could be further from the truth the ministry of the Spirit is to make us more like Christ Romans 8 9 to conform to the image of his Son nothing vinegary about Jesus is there and as that happens verse 18 becomes a reality and we who with unveiled faces contemplate the Greek there is like a glass or a mirror as we look into the mirror of his glory we reflect the Lord's glory and are being transformed into his image from one degree of glory to another or ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the

Spirit as we reflect on meditate on look at what we are beholding like the moon sort of reflects the light of the sun onto the earth as we reflect on the Lord and his glory then we too are able to receive of that glory we don't have to veil our faces like Moses and as we draw closer to him deeper into him verse 18 we are being transformed the Greek word is metamorphosed like a you know a caterpillar into a butterfly we start a hairy mess and end up radiant that's what he's saying here in the image of Christ so this ministry of the spirit is a ministry of the spirit that's all through the scriptures it is a ministry of new creation Genesis 1 the spirit hovered over the earth creation as you know the earth decreed as we looked at in Genesis with the flood spirit ministering into the life of Noah and his family it's a recreation going on in their lives we see that going on throughout the scriptures right to the point where we are experiencing new life new creatures new creations minister of the spirit is like that of a sculptor a true sculptor looks at a block of marble and doesn't just see a block he sees already what is in there and is chipping away just to get at what is already there the holy spirit knows what your future is and is at work chipping away the dross the old to bring forth the glory of who we are being made and ultimately we will be in heaven the problem is that we want sometimes just to bend down and put the bits back on don't we the holy spirit wants to be at work in us changing us and that can be painful but it's putting to death the old and Jesus described it like a pruning in order to bring forth the new every year I have to hack back my raspberry canes they look pretty pathetic and you think nothing is going to grow I think I've overdone it this year but actually then they produce they spout forth because they've been pruned to be even more fruitful and produce a harvest his ministry is to produce a harvest in you his is a ministry that Paul tells us here in verse 6 is a ministry that gives life vivid inner spiritual life that we take for granted but that many people who don't know it would give their eye teeth to know the meaning and the value and the purpose in life that that ministry brings and we forget that so many feel lost inside their sense of value and identity and purpose just they can't find it we fill it with lots of different things that over 10 20 30 40 years leaves them just feeling empty but Paul is reminding us this morning you friends we have something glorious we are receiving that

[33 : 36] Sinclair last week told us what Christ thinks of us and what he then asks of us and in doing that Sinclair is doing what he practicing what he preaches he often preaches tells preachers that you need to preach the indicatives before the imperatives in other words who we are in Christ before we say what we're to do in Christ because if we just preach you've got to do this got to do that it's just law and duty isn't it without understanding who we are and what he has done for us so we act out of delight not just duty and you know in one sense this is a kind of vulnerable moment for

us as a fellowship by God's grace he's taken us ten years and he's added to our number greatly but as you think forward to the next ten years what is the way what is what is the next direction for us what is the next season holds will it be you know as we have been that we have had steady growth over the last ten years apart from year three and years eight and nine where there was kind of exponential growth amongst us what will happen what will we need to do how will the leadership need to lead us forward in the next ten years if we keep growing the way that we're growing then certainly with the next three years we'll have to do something quite radical and there are probably eight or nine choices and I'll talk about them in a moment but for the moment

I want you to kind of just think what might happen in the next week or two because we are prayerfully sending out 25,000 invitations to 25,000 homes in Stirling starting tomorrow for the next two weeks that's approximately 35,000 adults will receive an invitation to come to Cornerstone now I don't know how you think about that I don't know if you're like me your default position is nothing will happen very Scottish way of looking things but actually if nobody comes that's fine we're giving folks the opportunity to hear about it and respond to the gospel of Jesus on the QR code there's answers to difficult questions if they click on it there's an opportunity to jump onto Glenn Scribner's 321 course come to our website and a testimony as well we're putting the gospel out there but what if 1% of people respond that's 350 adults that's more than double the number of adults who come to Cornerstone presently or even if half a percent respond that's 175 adults coming are we ready for that how would we feel if that happened how do you feel about me just saying that night nah it'll never happen and it might not but it might some people I think will come are we ready to receive are we ready to give them a welcome are we able to minister out of the fullness that we're receiving because we're understanding the glory of what we're receiving and have that overflow for others would it be resentful like oh for goodness sake can't get a seat do you know what I mean how we are doing in the

Lord and reflects how we are ministering and as we look forward to the next 10 years and you know who knows what the Lord will do surely we want to be ministering out of a sense of the privilege of what we are receiving glory wonder of what Christ has purchased for us and ministering to us and if you know a big jump of folks happened then you know we'd have to you know like in COVID you had to sort of adapt very quickly we would have to adapt very quickly in COVID we started multiple services to try and get 50 people in at 2 meters you know and we had the kids out in gazebos in the car you know all of that kind of stuff we might have to be prepared for that I don't know I genuinely don't know but you know we'll need to if something happens we need to be ready to react and I want us to be reacting out of a sense of wonder and joy that

Jesus is bringing in has gone out to bring in the lost and says will you look after them to bring in those who were like us at one point didn't know him hadn't a clue about him didn't know anything came to church again what the heck people took us under their wing point us to Jesus share the gospel with us and help us to grow in our walk help us to put our roots down deep I want us to be ministering we want to be ministering don't we out of a sense of the glory that we are receiving and sharing that with others I've said there are eight or nine other things that could happen you know they're getting some time to thinking what in general I'm not saying we're going to pick on any of these in particular but there are in general when churches are growing what happens well firstly they sometimes go to two services or they look for a bigger building or they build a bigger building or they plant a church somewhere in the city or out in the country or they go to multi-campus where there's a central church and then stuff is beamed out to certain sites around or reverse plant leave a smaller congregation in a place and then you know having bought somewhere a bit bigger somewhere else or have a bust up let's not do that one and then that starts a new church that happens or work with another church who are planting and ask a few folks who join that or pay for a planter in another city or another place in Scotland those are the things that churches do when they are growing like

Corrstone is growing and those are the kind of things that are in the mix that we need to be prayerfully thinking about I don't know at various points over the last few years I've thought maybe this maybe that and it hasn't been the thing but the Lord knows and we're trusting him to sort of point us in the right direction I think one of the things though is that and this is a real important lesson we were learning from Ruth in the example of Naomi to not be careful not to run on ahead of God with our agenda my agenda and but to wait on him on his will in his way and in his timing and that will know his blessing so pray praying as the reach folks come and get alongside us and help

us to think on these things as well ultimately these things are in the [41:10] Lord's hands and that's the best place for them to be but as we start in a sense a new year a new academic year we work on academic years because of their proximity to the university don't we and because we've got so many teachers in the fellowship but as we think about the new year I want us to stop and just reflect on the glory that we have and are receiving and that the glory of the ministry of the spirit is doing in us that we are being changed from one degree of glory to and that he has more for us ultimately in him more to appreciate about the gospel and what we are receiving and who we are in him through the different seasons and challenges of life so as you come to the table as we're drawn to remember just the depth of the love of Christ for us that he would give his life so that we would know life and come do business in your heart with him ask him to help you to walk deeper us as a fellowship to walk deeper closer to him grasping ever deeper the glory that we have received and are receiving let me pray

God our Father thank you for a moment in our year to maybe stop and reflect to look back and to look forward and to think with a measure of seriousness about what it is that gives your great desire for us thank you for your word and the way that it ministers and I pray Lord that the things that we've reflected on would go deep in our hearts and that we would be changed by the ministry of your spirit and we would be helped to change by one another so Lord we bless you and thank you for the wonder and the glory that we have received and are receiving we thank you in Jesus name Amen