

Sermon Title: A Psalm of Ascent, Psalms, Week Nine

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Sermon Questions:

1. When was a time you felt God care for you?
2. How do you need help right now?
3. When do you struggle to believe God keeps you?
4. How have you seen God use suffering in your life for good?
5. How does it change your perspective when you consider that our pilgrimage is headed to the church's wedding with Christ?

Transcript

You're going to hear this morning that life is a pilgrimage a fair bit. We're going to go through a psalm that is showing life as a pilgrimage, and specifically in that, the way in which God cares for us. In fact, there's a word show, Mary, you're going to hear that a few times, that God is a caregiver. God is a keeper. He's a guard.

He's watching over us. He's protecting us on this journey. I think in my own life, moments where I have felt care. I go back in ninth grade, I was taking math in the high school. And so ninth grade, it was junior high in Minnesota.

And so I would go into the high school and take geometry and trig with. With sophomores. And I was the only 9th grader in the class. And so I, you know, didn't really fit in. But I remember one day my teacher called on me to do a problem up on the board.

And I got up. I was. Math was my strength. And I got up, I grabbed. Grabbed the chalk and I turned around and my throat clenched up really tight and my palms started sweating.

And I just looked. I couldn't talk. I just stood there. Is that the only time in your life that's ever happened? Well, it's gotten better.

But I couldn't talk. Words didn't come out. Unfortunately, my teacher saw that I was dealing with anxiety in that moment, and I couldn't talk. And he stood up quickly. He just said, hey, Greg, let me do that.

And he took the chalk and he took it from me because he saw me. He saw what I was in, and he cared for me. Remember here we had not been in Tucson very long, new at new life. And our baby was born. She's 27 now.

And when she was born, 15 minutes before her birth, we were encouraged strongly to terminate the pregnancy, that the viability of life was not there for our child. And we went through this moment of saying, do everything you can to save the baby's life. Next thing you know, Deborah's wheeled out, racing, and a whole team are going to a surgery room to do a C section. I was left behind because I wasn't in scrubs. And so I'm racing to throw scrubs on.

And then I got to the door, I ran down the hallway, and as soon as I got to the door, I pushed out the door, and I was going down the hallway to the surgery room. And when I did, I ran into a few new lifers. And they were just there to support and pray. And this is like Midnight, and I go through the door and they saw that I was racing and they just said, praying, praying, praying, Go, go. And, you know, 15 minutes later, she was born.

And care. You feel it on this pilgrimage sometimes. So as a teenager, I lived in a mail truck for a season. And I look back on those days, a 1972 mail truck, and it was a strange season. I look back fondly because I was feeling alone, I was feeling lost, I was feeling challenged.

In a lot of ways, I was confused. I thought becoming a Christian life was going to get better. It didn't seem to be happening. And yet God wrapped me in his presence in tangible, sweet ways where I would just be weeping and I would feel him bring me under his wing and just comfort me. And I look back fondly on that because I don't know that I would have had the intimacy with the Lord that in many ways I have today, that was born in those moments.

Life is a pilgrimage. But let's never forget God is a faithful, protecting keeper who is caring for us along the way, even if we don't see Him. So we've been walking through the psalms and sermon series called the Songbook for the Soul. And we come to a psalm today, a Psalm of Ascent of Going up. In fact, we're going to do something a little bit different today.

We're going to actually share with you about. We're going to begin by sharing about the 15 Psalms of ascent, a little bit about kind of what are some of the themes in those psalms. It's Psalm 120 to 134. And then we're going to zero in on one of those Psalms, Psalm 121. So let's begin by talking about what the Psalms of Ascent are.

What are these Psalms of Going Up? I'm going to talk about three themes in those Psalms. First is life as a pilgrimage. Second is God's protection. And third is the unity that God calls us into.

So first, the first theme we have in these Psalms of Ascent is that life is a pilgrimage, a traveling reality, a journey together. There's three pilgrimages in the life of a Jewish person at this time in which they would join together in Jerusalem for worship. The first of those in the spring is Passover. The second of Those is Pentecost, 50 days after Passover. And the last of those is Sukkot.

That's in the fall. That's a feast of tabernacles or a booths. A feast of booths. Now, three times a year, all of Israel, all of the faithful ones, would Come would go up to Jerusalem to worship. Now, when we say go up, yes, Jerusalem is one of the higher places in Israel.

It's not the highest. Actually, we're going to refer to one of the highest. The highest place in Israel in just a minute here. But it's one of the highest places. But the reality is, for a Jew, you could be on Mount Everest and you're still going up to Jerusalem.

Because there's a spiritual reality in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is where the temple of God is, the presence of God is, and where the people of God gather around. The presence of God. And so this pilgrimage for Jews is also a reality for all of us who are followers of God. We are on a journey.

We are on a journey to the presence of God. And we are on a journey together. Together. God hasn't left us alone. I want to share with us one of these psalms that speaks of this pilgrimage and the reality of the destination of that pilgrimage as Jerusalem.

It's Psalm 122. Read the entire Psalm for us. It's nine verses. It says this. I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord.

Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, built as a city that is bound firmly together, to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel to give thanks to the name of the Lord. There thrones of judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May they be secure who love you.

Peace be within your walls and security within your towers. For my brothers and companions sake, I will say, peace be within you. For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good. The first theme of the Psalms of Ascent is this, that life is a pilgrimage. Life is a pilgrimage.

We're on this journey. We're on this journey together. And a couple other themes. So a second theme is God's protection. All the way through the Psalms of ascent from 120 to 134.

This notion of God being the protector, of watching over us as we going, comes up over and over. In Psalm 125 we read these words in verse 1 and 2. Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people from this time forth and forevermore, over and over. God is protecting you.

God is watching over you. Now it's very possible to be in the midst of suffering in life and to

think, well, it doesn't seem like God's protecting me. Why is this happening? And why is that happening? And why is this happening if God is protecting me?

And you could say the same thing of Israel at any point, whether it's slavery, whether it's captivity, whether it's the journey in between, it's a matter of perspective in many ways. If we look and glance and at all of the aspects of suffering, because the fact that God is a protector doesn't mean that there isn't suffering in life. But if we focus simply on aspects of suffering in this broken world, we'll miss it. But behind the scenes, there are a thousand ways in which God is protecting us all of the time. He is with us in the midst of suffering.

He is protecting us from other suffering, and he is with us. And it's just a matter of perspective to take our eyes off of the negative and place our eyes onto God and see the fact. Yes, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you are with me. You're right here with me. You're doing miracle after miracle after miracle.

Give me eyes to see your miracles, God. Give me eyes to see you protecting me. A third dynamic in these Psalms of ascent, 120 to 134, is unity over and over, the goodness of the gathering of the people of God. Psalm 133. I'm going to read the whole Psalm of this, just as John did earlier of a different Psalm 133.

Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity. It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes. Now just one quick pause there. You might look at that like, I'm not sure I get the goodness of oil pouring down your head, getting all over your shirt. Like, what's.

What's so good? As we live in Tucson so we can relay little. Imagine a world without lotion to put on every morning. Imagine a world without where there isn't the monsoons coming at the time, dropping some rain where it is parched, dry. Your skin is like an alligator cracked.

Your scalp is like an alligator cracked. And there's oil being poured on your skin, healing. You can feel it tingle as your skin heals and finds moisture. You see, that's what it's like when the community of God draws together. The psalm continues.

It's like the dew of Hermon. That's the highest peak in Israel, in the very far north. It's like the Dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion, falls all the way down to Jerusalem. It's like the dew of the mountains coming down and watering the land. For there the Lord has commanded the blessing.

Life forevermore. Oh, how good it is when the people dwell together in unity. It is a good thing. Just yesterday was talking with someone who was sharing about their week their husband had a surgery earlier in the week. Their family happens to all be out of town.

There was a little anxiety going into the surgery. They didn't know where it was going. This gal sharing the story was blubbery for like 10 minutes, trying to share what was going on. Just crying because phone call came in, texts came in, someone came to visit. The family of God came around and she just said, I have never been more thankful.

I've never been more. There is a blessing in the unity of the people of God on a pilgrimage together. So three themes in the psalms of ascent. And now we're going to zero in on one of the psalms. We're going to see all three of these themes.

Life is a pilgrimage. We're going to see God's protection. We're going to see the invitation to unity, all in this psalm. But we're going to spend the rest of our time now in Psalm 121, going verse by verse through Psalm 121. So let's turn to Psalm 121.

A Psalm of ascent begins this way. I lift up my eyes to the hills, from where does my help come. I lift my eyes up to the hills, from where does my help come. I want you to imagine in a time and a space like Israel at that time, you're on a pilgrimage up to the hills of Jerusalem. So the valleys are beautiful places.

It's where the. It's where the riverbeds are. It's where they're. It's the greenest. But it's also the most dangerous for an ancient traveler exposed to wild animals, to robbers.

Like anybody who's ever watched a Western gets this right. You get to the time where the travelers are going through a ravine and you're like, don't go. Like, that's where the robbers are going to get you, right? And it's the same here. There's.

There's a danger and the traveler is traveling upward in a valley, maybe call it a valley of a shadow of death, as it does in Psalm 23. And he says, where does my help come from? I lift up my eyes, anxious to the hills where danger awaits. And I wonder where's help going to come for me. This is where the Christian life begins.

To be a Christian is to ask this question is to recognize that we can't protect ourselves, that we are people in need of help. We get it right. There's all sorts of temptations in this world to grasp for when we think about things that can help us. We think about security blankets in this world. We think about knowledge.

We think about shopping or food or money or another swipe on the device to distract you.

Do any of those things help us? No. Are they true help? No. So the response comes in verse two.

My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. Our help can't be ourself. It's nothing in this world. It's nothing man made. It's not getting to the top of the hill.

It's not self protecting. It is from the one who made the hill, made the earth. We ascend to Jerusalem with eyes set on the presence of the Lord. And it's only in him who can help us. This psalm of ascent says, as I ascend to the Lord, he is the only one who can rescue me now.

And so Lord, be my rescuer, be my help. Psalm goes on into verse three. He will not let your foot be moved. He who keeps you will not slumber first. Remember that word keeps.

We're going to read that word six times by the end of this psalm. It's the word show mer. It's that word I mentioned earlier. Caregiver, protector, watcher, seer, guard, protector. He's our keeper and he's keeping us.

It's saying, he will not let our foot be moved. There's all kinds of environments where you don't want your foot to slip. For the last decade, once a year, I have climbed a peak in Colorado that I consider to be fun, called Longs Peak and Longs Peak. The first six miles of the hike are challenging because you gain maybe 4,500ft of elevation, but they're relatively simple. And then you come to the keyhole.

You come to the crest where you're on the north face and you come up this crest and you're going to drop down onto the south face and you can see the keyhole from a long way away. The goal is to be there by sunrise. So you have to start the hike at maybe three in the morning or two in the morning to get to the keyhole by sunrise. So there's sunrise at the keyhole and that's it. You get to that ridge and you drop down.

Now the Moment you drop down on the other side, there are four hazards that take you the rest of the way. First, you're on the ledges. The ledges is a stretch where you're up against the mountain and your foot is on, you know, little 6 inch or 2 inch pieces of rock. As you just try and keep yourself there and make sure there's no wind to try and pull you off. You get through the ledges, you go up the trough.

The trough is this tricky place where you're, you're, you're looking for footholds to climb after. That's the narrows. The trickiest thing about the narrows is there's thousand foot drops at your side all the way. And then when you finally get right up towards the top, it's called the home stretch. This is the home stretch.

The home stretch is easy, it's just a little steep. It's kind of easy because there's a Craig to grab onto the whole way. So you're there but you're scrambling. And so Paul's really. So I'm actually going to do this next week and Paul Mueller is joining me.

So he and his wife. His wife is a little sweaty palm watching the picture. I'll just say every step of that last mile and a half to get to the summit is not a place where you want your foot to slip. You are going slow. You're at 14,000ft, so you're only taking 20 steps and stopping.

20 steps and stopping, making sure you don't get dizzy because you don't want your foot to slip. On a pilgrimage, it's important. God's saying, I'm not going to let your foot slip. I am watching over your steps. I am protecting you.

I am carrying you. I am watching over you. Verse 3. He will not let your foot be moved. He who keeps you will not slumber.

Behold, verse four. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. That's twice now we've heard that word. Keeps. He's watching over us.

He's keeping us. He's protecting us. And he's doing so at night. You'll notice he's. He's watching over us.

He doesn't doze off, he doesn't take a break. He doesn't need a nap. You think of the classic lines, nothing good happens after midnight. Correct. Nothing good.

As a little kid, you know this going down. If you grew up in a place that had basements, you could go down into the basement during the day, no problem. But after sundown, when it's dark, you don't go down in the basement, there's not a chance. You go down into the basement. Not alone, not without lots of lights, not without.

All right, Pete, Joe, Bob, why don't you guys come down with me? I should do that. I used to make up names in case there was a bad guy, they'd hear there was a crowd coming. I just make them up as I went. Here we go.

God's with us and he doesn't doze off. Now listen to the word keeper continue as we go. Verse 5 Again, this is the third occasion. The Lord is your keeper. The Lord is your shade on your right hand.

The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. Verse 7, the Lord will keep you from all evil. He will keep your life. Verse 8, the last of the six. The Lord will keep your going out and you're coming in.

From this time forth and forevermore he will keep you. I hope you feel the warmth in that word. So we have an eight year old granddaughter and one of the tricky things of putting her to bed is that she has a little stuffed animal dog named Leo. And sleeping without Leo is tragic. Like it doesn't happen.

There have been times we have gotten the kids and like gone off into the mountains and then realized. I say times. There's one time we got up, we didn't have Leo. This was worth a couple hour drive down the mountain to try and go find Leo. And like it was because Leo was everything.

Like, she holds Leo. She, like she knows where Leo is. And at all moments, at all times, she goes to bed with Leo every single night. She, you could say she keeps Leo. Feel the warmth in the word.

God is your keeper. Not some distant looking over you. He is intimately involved in your life, holding you, keeping you, cherishing you, watching you through the pilgrimage of life. Like, let's just hang out there just for a little bit. Six times in this passage, the Lord keeps you.

I don't know if anybody comes from the age of trapper keepers. I don't know if those still exist. Okay, trapper keeper. So like little John, you know, in school, trapper keeper, like you just keep accumulating stuff. I never looked at the stuff, right, like, just held there as the.

It got wider and wider as the school year went on. And then it came to the end of the year and I threw the stuff away. God doesn't keep us in that fashion. God keeps us with care and intention. We have four pets at the Beeson household.

We have three tortoises and a Dog. One of those tortoises was gone for five years. Five years. We thought it was. We thought it was.

It had met its maker. We had no idea where this thing went. In fact, it was in the middle of an afternoon. Someone had come to visit us. We're driving along.

They saw the tortoise in the middle of the road. They said, hey, this looks like your tortoise. Is it yours? We're like, yeah, sure. Wait a second.

So we went back, we grabbed it, we brought it back, we said, oh, that's number three. He's been gone five years, right? Like, he made it. And tortoises are pretty low, low maintenance kind of animals. Six months of the year, they're hibernating.

Like, you just throw out some veggies for them, like. And then there's our dog, the prince, right? Like, I mean, we know where our dog is at all times. He sleeps on our bed with us. He was really anxious this week because he gets afraid of the wind, right?

Anybody have a dog like this, right? I take him on walks, and if he. If he stutters even a little bit, I'm down on all fours figuring out where's the little spine in his paw. That's how God keeps us.

He cares for us.

He sees us. He attends to us. He misses nothing. Nothing. Now, you could be listening to that.

You could be listening to this language of he doesn't even let the sun hit us. We're in Tucson, for Pete's sake. What are you talking about? He doesn't let evil befall us. That's not my experience.

You might be saying, what of my friend in the hospital right now? What of my marriage that fell apart last year after years? What of the job that I just lost? What of the cancer diagnosis to my loved one? What of this, Lord?

Here's the invitation for us. We have to understand this in a bigger perspective.

What we're focusing on is an eternal God who keeps us eternally. God keeps us eternally. There's a larger framework at play here. I want to take us over to Romans 8, where Paul talks about this, acknowledging suffering and then talking about the reality of a keeping God who keeps us through suffering. Listen to Romans 8, starting in verse 18.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. Now, Paul was a man who endured much suffering. Beatings and stonings and imprisonment and starvation. And Paul says, there is a real thing called suffering.

But when you put it in the scope of what God is doing eternally, don't, don't miss his keeping work in your life. Pressing down to one of the most famous passages in all scripture, he continues, in verse 28, he says this, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purposes. What Paul is saying is this, is that God has good purposes and he's keeping us into those purposes. He is shaping us and forming us through every trial, through every temptation, through every valley, into the good work that he has planned for us.

There's a pastor by the name of John Piper, and he says this. He says God cares for suffering, especially eternal suffering. God cares, he keeps. But he is doing a work so much bigger than the finite work we can see in front of us. He is doing an internally keeping work in every one of our lives.

Perspective is such a huge thing. So small little thing. I had two spots on my face that I had to have taken off. This is evidently something young people have done all the time. I teased that like I heard I had a spot on my face.

Well, that's not me. That's for old people. That's not. But I had a spot over here and I had a spot here. And so two spots just in the last couple weeks taken off and.

And I'm not supposed to have them in the sunshine now because they're new skin and it's just healing. And the cloud cover, I don't know if you noticed, there's just a nice, gentle, beautiful cloud cover. This morning when I would be standing outside for quite a while greeting people at church. And I just think, thanks, God. Thanks for what might be looked at as a mini miracle.

In the mats of just a little thing. I smiled. God put those clouds up there for me. I want to go back to this eternal dynamic. Psalm 121, the last of the six keeps, verse 8.

The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. Forevermore. So as God interacts in the world of suffering, his concern is not simply today. In fact, he's going to use things that are evil and bad. He's going to use suffering in all of its ways to mold us and shape us.

Because where he is taking us is into eternity. Where he is taking us is forever. My favorite, or at least one of my favorite benedictions in all of scripture. The very last words of Jude. The letter of Jude ends with these two Words, two verses now.

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time, now and forevermore and amen. God is keeping us. He's holding us. He's carrying us through all the bumps of this journey to the final place of glory. I don't know about you, I find great peace in the fact that in all the bumps of life, I'm going to walk across that finish line.

And it's not because I have confidence in myself to get there. I'm going to walk across that finish line because I have a keeper who's carrying me and he's going to carry me all the way into glory. Praise God. So let's land this. What do we do with this?

Three invitations for us. Number one, we all need help. It starts there, doesn't it? With just an acknowledgement of need. This is where the psalm begins.

Let me go back to verse one. I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come from? I don't know what your hills are. I don't know what your fears are this morning, but we all have them.

Anxieties, relational anxieties, health anxieties, spiritual anxieties, job anxieties. Two weeks until school, kids, I'm sorry to let you know, school anxieties, anxieties come. We lift up our eyes and we say, I need help. Every one of us does, desperately needs help. We all need help,

number one.

Number two. Lift your eyes, lift your eyes. Lift your eyes. Past the short term solutions that we fill our stuff with, numbing ourself with scrolling, shopping, trying to just ease the pain, trying to accumulate more, trying to pull more security around us through finances or relationships or whatever it is. Lift up your eyes to the only one who can help.

Verse 2 says this. My hope comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. We have a helper. We have a keeper. His name is Jesus.

And you can call out to him because he loves you. He cares for you. Call out to the Lord. We all need help. And lift our eyes, Lift our eyes to the Lord.

A third goes back to that theme of unity. Keep walking together. Keep walking together. All through this psalm, we didn't dwell on it all. All of the keeps deal with a plural.

Behold he who keeps Israel. The Lord is your helper. That's not singular, that's plural. The Lord will keep you plural from evil. He will Keep your plural life.

He will keep you. You're going out and you're coming in plural. There's a dynamic in this psalm which is saying God keeps a people. We live in a strange way world. So religion has never been viewed lower than it is right now in the United States of America.

We just took this survey of cultural values the New York Times, I think, had out, and we were amazed. So as it ranked values, we put in ours, and then it told us the countries, and both of us, my top four, it said, well, you got to take those down for the country. And my bottom five said, oh, those are the top ones for the country. I was in complete reversal. But at either place, 9 or 10, was religion.

Religion. We live in a world that even the best have this idea. Well, I believe in God, just not church and people, not any kind of religion. Here's the thing. God has designed us to.

To have deep relationships together. That's where we're going into eternity as the family of God. Does God care for us and keep us individually? Yes. Yes.

But does he care for us together even more? So if we want God to give us a hug, there are ways in prayer and with him, there are ways that in a sense, we can imagine and kind of feel in our spirit, God giving us a hug. That's a very different thing from God using another human being to come up alongside of us and put their arm around us and just hold us as we weep. I've never heard God's audible voice, but I do through other people all the time. You'll hear a phrase here at New Life.

Frequently, life is better together. If you're watching online, please hear me. There are lots of reasons to watch online, but draw into community. Don't let online resources make you think that you can just worship on your own. We live in a world in the United States, which puts religion last.

The bottom of the list. Well, I believe in God, but I don't want people around. And yet we have never been more alone. We have never been more isolated. Perhaps one of the greatest problems we have in the Western world right now.

Anxiety, depression, lots of other things. The result of the fact that we live independent, isolated lives alone.

You and I weren't made that way. We were made to be a community. So may it be that we all take measure. How can I go deeper into community in my life? How can I evaluate community and go deeper into relationships?

Now we have the privilege this morning of closing the service by coming before the Lord's table. Hold on. I'll invite you in a little bit to grab elements if you don't have them. But I'm going to say this. So communion is a beautiful dynamic of recognizing God's care for us individually and the community of God's people.

So even when we say this is the body of Christ broken for us, when we are called to remember the body of Christ, we're called to remember the body of Christ that hung on the cross and the body of Christ that is the church. In fact, in First Corinthians, the church got in trouble because they weren't considering each other as they came before the Lord's table. So as we come before the Lord's table this morning, we want to take it together. I get every introvert in the room just went, take it together. Genuinely.

I pray that no one takes communion alone this morning. That somehow in groups of two or three people sitting next to you, look down the row before you and in front of you just to make sure that no one is left out if they want to take communion, that we take it together. You don't have to say much as we take the bread. And if you want to, you can pray for each other. You don't have to share your deepest, darkest secrets.

Prayer requests. It can just be a prayer of a blessing and it can simply be the body of Christ broken for you and then sharing that together. So let's break to grab communion elements. We have it in the front, on both sides, on the back, under the glass window. Over here is gluten free.

If you're at home, I'd invite you to go grab communion elements of any sorts. The Lord's

table is open to anyone who has surrendered their life to Jesus. If Jesus is your Savior, you want him to be your Savior. And now is a moment of surrender. Come and participate in the Lord's Table.

As we're getting the elements, I will just introduce on that night that Jesus was betrayed. He took the bread and after giving thanks, he broke it.

He said, this is my body broken for you. Take and eat in remembrance of me. And so we take of the Lord's table the body of Christ in the bread. Now at New Life, we frequently say we have bread in front of us, a matzah. For most of us, I've actually found the gluten free to taste better than the matzah.

It's just a little inside scoop.

When we taste it, it's going to taste just like matzah or just like the gluten free or whatever bread someone has at home, but spiritually, we're going to pray. And God anoints this. He tells us this is a sacrament of the Church, a sacred thing. God anoints this that spiritually, this becomes his body broken for us. And so we see on the cross and the body of Christ broken because of our sins.

Because of our sins. And by receiving it in us, we not only receive what Jesus did for us, but we receive it together, sharing the same body of Christ in each one of us. And we then become a family of God's people. So turn to one another and take just a minute or so to share with each other the body of Christ broken for you. Let's look around, try and make sure no one's left alone.

And let's come before the Lord in communion, making sure that people are gathered together.