



How I Want to Die

Pastor Ted Cunningham

I hope you came prepared for a fun, exciting message about death. That's where we are headed today. I'm not a big fan of death; I recommend you avoid it whenever possible. I want to be really clear and state this upfront. Death is our enemy, Jesus is our Savior, and heaven is our home.

I was at a funeral last year and the pastor was wearing me out. I wasn't speaking at it, but I was listening. I was there to honor the life of the one who died and to support the family. The pastor kept referring to death as a gift. I kept going back to Romans 5: 12, which clearly states: ***Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.*** Death is a curse and death is a reminder of God's judgment upon sin. To say it again, death is our enemy, Jesus is our Savior, and heaven is our home.

Two years ago, when I got the call that Judi Sedlacek had gone home to be with the Lord, I knew that one of the hardest phone calls I'd make would be to my friend Jim.

I thought I'd be crying a lot through this message today. I think I'm okay because I shed many tears over the last couple of weeks. There's something about ministry as we rejoice together and we rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn.

I just remember that phone call to Jim. When he answered, I could hear the tears. He was still sitting there in his home. He hadn't yet gone to make plans. We started talking through the life of Judi and we talked about the best way that we could remember her at her funeral. I flew out to Phoenix for that funeral. Many of you tried to get there for it, but were unable to. You called Jim and spent time with him over the phone.

I just remember being with him that day, talking about death. Jim reminded me that a lot of people have a warped view about death. A lot of people, when it comes to mourning and grieving, have a warped view about it. It was one of the hardest funerals I've done because there weren't very many people there. They had just moved there so they didn't have a lot of friends and family in the area. Jim Wept through the funeral and I wept through the funeral. At one point, he looked up at me and I think he said something like "Pull it together, Ted, we gotta get through this."

This Wednesday I went to see my friend Gary Smalley in hospice care. I walked in the room and I fell on him and I kissed him on the forehead, kissed him on the cheek, said I love you, and as I came up from him, with a smile and a slight chuckle, he said, "I'm almost dead."

I said, "Gary, we've talked about this day for a long time."

If you remember Gary being here, speaking, and preaching, he loved "You know you're getting old when..." jokes. He always wanted me to set him up for those. He and Joe... A little bit bossy right before speaking time. He would tell me "Okay, when you get up there, I want you to say..." He wanted that set up so he could come in and slam it down. His favorite way for me to set him up was to say "Hey, everybody, this year Gary Smalley celebrated 73 years upon this earth!" And everybody would cheer. "But you know what the means. If you could, turn down these bright lights because now when Gary sees a bright light, he starts walking towards it."

Gary requested some Jim Gaffigan jokes on Wednesday so I told him all the Jim Gaffigan jokes I could. With my friend and one of the other elders... It was Doug Goodwin, myself, and Gary. We read honor lists that many of you prepared. We read to him what we thought of him.

As we think about death, yes, we avoid it whenever possible, but how do you want to die? Have you thought about that? I want to talk to you today about how I want to die. Before we set this up, I have to be really clear that you may have a lot of wishes for your death, and I'm going to share some of mine with you today. I know these are not guaranteed. I don't have a guarantee on some of the stuff I'm going to share with you. They are my desires at the end and how I would like to die.

Sitting on the front row, Amy just reminded me that when Carolyn was singing, I said, "That's another one I want at the funeral." She goes, "No one on this earth talks about their funeral as much as you." But while she was singing the song, I was already producing my funeral. I want baptism videos in the background. Katie has strict plans. As Carolyn was walking off the stage, I told Amy I wanted that song at my funeral. It may change in the next couple of months as new songs come out and we get excited about new songs, but, for now, that's the song I want.

I want you to turn in your Bibles to Genesis 49. Today, we are going to look at the death of Jacob. In two weeks, we are going to look at the death of Jesus. Easter is early this year. We are excited and getting ready for it. We are going to look at the resurrection of Jesus. What a great month.

Years ago, I had a friend who lost his son right before Easter. I told him "You have to come to church Sunday." He's not one that attends all that often. I said, "Would you please come because there is never a better time than now to discuss the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead."

So, this month, if you have a lot going on in March, just make a plan to be here for the next several weeks as we talk a lot about death. Then we will end the month with the resurrection of Jesus.

1. I want my family gathered around me.

Here's the first thing we are going to see in Genesis 49. We don't have time to go through both Chapters 49 and 50. I want to encourage you to study that on your own this week and maybe share it with your family. The first thing I want as I die is my family gathered around me.

A friend of mine told me this week “You really spend your whole life working for six pallbearers.” Think about that for just a second. Do you know who your six pallbearers would be? Some of you are thinking *I don't think I'd find six, but I'm hoping for four.* Isn't it sad when you have to go looking for all those cousins to fill in the last two spots? Here's what he said after he told me about his six pallbearers. He was asking me to be one. He said, “But here's what I've learned: You're working your whole life for six pallbearers. And the older I get the harder they are to replace.”

Let's look at the death of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Here's what it says in Genesis 49. ***1 Then Jacob called for his sons...*** Which would be the 12 tribes of Israel (Jacob). ***...and said: “Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come. 2 Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob; listen to your father Israel.***

Here's what I shared this week with a friend who is losing a loved one. I told him to take as much time off work as he possibly could, spend as much money as is necessary, and go be with his dad as he leaves this earth. It's not about living with regrets after he's gone, but you want this time. You want to be gathered around him. I want my family gathered around me. I realize it's not going to be hundreds of people. It's not going to be dozens of people. But within the room, as it was with my wife's grandfather three years ago... We all gathered in that room and that was a special time for us over the period of days as Lloyd went to be with Jesus. We gathered around him and spent time with him. Here's what the gathering represents. It's the second thing I want when my death takes place.

2. I want to bless my family.

As we are going to see in Genesis 49, the blessing is not just mere wishes. It's not just saying the “I love you's;” it's actually picturing a special future. It's speaking words of high value and picturing a special future; it's part of the blessing.

Here's what we read as you get to the end. I'm going to summarize Verses three through twenty-seven, but when you get to Verse twenty-eight; ***All these are the twelve tribes of Israel,*** the sons of Jacob. This is what their father said to them when he blessed them, giving each the blessing appropriate to him. If I could, for the sake of time, just share with you what those twelve blessing were.

To Reuben, the first born, it was very clear in scripture that he forfeited his blessing because of defiling his father's bed. Simeon and Levi would have 48 cities scattered throughout the tribes. Theirs blessing was one of ministry. Judah's blessing was of leadership. Zebulun was given territory and trading routes spoken over him. Issachar was given the strength of his descendants. A donkey is actually used because he is told he was going to be working for others.

Dan would judge. Gad was given the special future of skillful warriors. Asher would prosper with fertile land and harbors for trade. Naphtali would be nourished with rich natural resources. Joseph had special standing among his brothers and he was given more space in this blessing than the other brothers. Whereas Gad was the skillful warriors, Benjamin would be the aggressive warriors. Again, this blessing was not mere wishes, but was spoken over them.

If you've ever been to a funeral, you know that's the time when we speak words of high value over the one that we love and the one that we have lost. Our encouragement, our challenge to those at a funeral is not to wait for this day. Don't wait for the day of someone's death to tell them how much they mean to you. Don't wait for the day of death to share stories about how they blessed you. Don't wait for the day of someone's death to picture the generations that will follow them and the blessing they will receive and the lessons they will have passed onto them. Share that now. Share that as you are along the way. Maybe today is the day that you call a loved one that you haven't spoken to for a while and you share a blessing with them.

My brother Andy and I always joke how we have to stop meeting now at funerals. Does anybody know what I'm talking about? It's like the only time we, brothers in our 40s now, get together is at a funeral. We like each other more than that. We can make time for each other. We can do stuff together without getting together at a funeral. It's at that time that we get together, we start thinking, we start wondering about the person, we start blessing the person, and we share stories of the person. This is what we should have done years ago.

Again, I'm not guaranteed this because I may go suddenly. If I spend too much time in Table Rock today, it may be today. I may not get this chance, but I want this. I want to speak a blessing. And if it's not on the days leading up to my death, it will be today that I speak this blessing over my children.

3. I want to give my family instructions for my funeral and burial.

My mom's an expert at this. She already has her PowerPoint put together for me. I don't even have to get the pictures organized. Once you get grandma's PowerPoint done, you can really just use that one for the rest of the funerals in your family. You just edit a few more photos in there. Some of you need to lighten up. This is going to be a good day. We are okay with talking about this.

This is what's driving my family crazy. My daughter says, "Dad, why do we talk about this so much?" It's because I want them to know. I'm giving specific instructions.

Look at the instructions that Jacob gave to Joseph. ***29 Then he gave them these instructions: "I am about to be gathered to my people.*** This is a great expression in the scripture for death. We read in the New Testament the expression of "fall asleep," but here it's "gathered to my people." ***Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite...*** In other words, he wants to be buried in Canaan. He doesn't want to be buried in Egypt.

How many of you can say this about your marriage? Amy and I have very different opinions about death and burial and funeral process. How many of you have a different opinion than your spouse. Amy has given me permission to share this with you today. Amy wants to donate 100% of her body to science. I'm struggling with that. I'm good with major organs; I totally get that. Let's bless somebody on our way out. But giving your entire body to science to end up in one of those displays like Humans. Have you seen those displays in museums? Those are real people that donated their body to science. I told Amy that the last thing I am ever going to do is be walking through some museum in Chicago with my grandchildren, walk into the Humans Exhibit, and have the grandchildren yell, "Grandma!"

Have you seen the poses they put these people in? Can you see Amy on display doing the discus? Come on! I've often thought though of how much fun it would be. There's Amy on display in the Humans Origins at the Chicago Museum of Natural Science and the rapture takes place. Someone is looking at her throwing the discus and all of the sudden she's gone. That would be funnier for some of you if you didn't watch so much Jim Baker. But that actually would be a pretty good testimony. I told her I don't want to be donated to science, but she can give all my major organs away.

These are my wishes: My services will be at 3:00pm and 8:00pm. Paul Harris has agreed to do a 30-minute preshow. This is the best part – I'm going to be buried in a Yeti 350. We are going to see how long I can last inside this thing. So, when you walk by my casket, you'll be mourning and crying and then you'll be like "Oh, I'll take a Diet Coke." Here are my funeral wishes and it's going to shock you, but I'm going to let another comedian share with you some great wishes for a funeral. You need to lighten up to watch this next clip.

Video Plays – Tim Hawkins – If you're a believer in Jesus, death should be a party. Death, where is that sting? I ain't afraid of death; bring it. Not right now, but you know. You're going to want to come to my funeral. I'm going to put the *fun* in funeral. It's going to be hard to be sad when I've got a big bowl of candy on my chest. That's going to help some people, man.

People walkin' by my casket "I can't believe you're gone! I can't believe... Smarties! Oh my God! I love Smarties." If somebody takes two pieces, I'll grab their arm.

Come on. Come to my funeral, man. There's going to be dancing, man. I'm going to have music and a D.J. "Just throw your hands in the air... and wave them like you ain't in there." Come to my funeral, man; it's going to be great. There's going to be a mosh pit, man. And don't just let me lay there. Get me involved. Pick me up. I'll be crowd surfed.

People will be like "Man, did you go to Hawkins' funeral?"

"Yeah, it was AWESOME!"

Some of you may not have been ready for that, but that was my personal request. That clip is my son Carson's favorite; he loves that clip. He has it memorized and he's going to honor all of those wishes at my funeral.

4. I want to draw my last breath on my own.

Again, I'm not guaranteed this; I'm just saying I desire to draw my last my breath on my own. We read this in the story of Jacob. ***33 When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people.***

My friend, John Jenkins, is in the medical field. He sent me this article a couple of months ago. It's written by an emergency room physician who talks about how we used to die compared to how we die

now. It's so well written and, again, this is all part of how you and I process death and how we handle death. I want to read his words for you. This is from Dr. Louis Profeta

In the old days, she would be propped up on a comfy pillow, in fresh cleaned sheets under the corner window where she would in days gone past watch her children play. Soup would boil on the stove just in case she felt like a sip or two. Perhaps the radio softly played Al Jolson or Glenn Miller, flowers sat on the nightstand, and family quietly came and went. These were her last days. Spent with familiar sounds, in a familiar room, with familiar smells that gave her a final chance to summon memories that will help carry her away. She might have offered a hint of a smile or a soft squeeze of the hand but it was all right if she didn't. She lost her own words to tell us that it's OK to just let her die, but she trusted us to be her voice and we took that trust to heart.

This is how we used to see her before we became blinded by the endless tones of monitors and whirrs of machines, buzzers, buttons and tubes that can add five years to a shell of a body that was entrusted to us and should have been allowed to pass quietly propped up in a corner room, under a window, scents of homemade soup in case she wanted a sip.

When it comes time for us to be called home, those of us in the know will pray that when we gaze down upon our last breath we will be grateful that our own doctors and families chose to do what they should instead of what they could, and with that we will close our eyes to familiar sounds in a familiar room, a fleeting smile and a final soft squeeze of a familiar hand.

This is the desire. Yes, death is the enemy, but you have to now move from this death scene to the grieving process. This is where we need to spend a little bit of time. I know funerals and death bring about emotions that sometimes trump theology. Today is a good day for us bring the theology in to make sure we know what we believe about death. We know what we believe about mourning and grieving, so when that day comes and you are mourning with those who mourn or you are mourning for the loss of a friend or family member, you know what is true. Here is the last thing we learn from this scene of Jacob's death.

5. I want my family to grieve.

I hear this a lot among Christians today. "I don't want my family to grieve." I've made it very clear to my children. I want them to cry. They better shed some tears. Grieving is good. Mourning is good. Crying is a great expression. I want my family to grieve. We read this beautiful scene of Joseph grieving for his father in Genesis 50. **1 Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him.** I used to love doing this when we had a lot more retired elders. Most of all of our elders now work, but we had Gary, Jim, and Bill. If I had to make a hospital visit, I would call one of them and ask them to go with me.

On one of the visits, I called Gary and asked him to go with me as this gentleman was about to take his last breath. Gary and I just did our normal thing. We had fun, we laughed, and we cracked up the whole way to the hospital. When we got there, I think Gary wasn't prepared. There were minutes or hours left before this man went to be with the Lord. We beat the daughter to the hospital and when she came in,

she threw herself onto her dad. Gary lost it and fell down. I think my words were “Pull yourself together, man. We’re the professionals here.” It was a mess. I was trying to comfort Gary and comfort the family. Emotionally drained, we got out to the car and he said, “I did not see that coming.” Do you know why he didn’t see it coming? It’s because he was picturing Kari Gibson, his daughter, falling onto him. He goes “I saw her falling on me and I lost it.” That was the last time I ever called Gary to go with me to the hospital.

Joseph threw himself on his father. I witnessed this with my father-in-law, Dennis Freitag. He threw himself on Lloyd Freitag. I still remember the words. “I love you, Dad. You're the best dad a son could ever ask for.”

2 Then Joseph directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father Israel. So the physicians embalmed him, 3 taking a full forty days, for that was the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.

You see this as you understand the text in mourning. They are not mourning for Jacob; they are respecting and mourning with Joseph. They are obliging him. When he told them he was going to go bury his father in Canaan because he didn’t want to be buried in Egypt, the Egyptians honored that because they were respecting and honoring Joseph. But grieving took place. The scripture is very clear. In Ecclesiastes, here’s what we read: ***There is a time to be born and a time to die. There’s a time to mourn and a time to dance.***

You’ve heard me share this verse often. It’s a few chapters later in Ecclesiastes. ***It’s better to go to a house of mourning*** or to a funeral ***than to go to a house of feasting*** or a party. ***For death is the destiny of everyone.*** The mortality rate is still one out of every one. It’s for all of us. We will die. The living should take this to heart. We need to ask the good questions.

Here’s why we don’t want to minimize grieving. We have to be very careful in the church.

Minimizing another’s grief is an unbiblical denial of our humanity.

We need to accept grieving and mourning. This is for you too, as you instruct your family about death. Here are some things I’ve heard and we want to avoid. I’ve heard people say, “Don’t cry for me.” Crying is a great expression of mourning. I want to share what one pastor said as he talks about this being the first stage, the crisis stage. There are three stages of death: crisis, crucible, and construction.

During the crisis stage, a person feels shock and even numbness. Crying is a healthy sign of emotional release during this time. To help a person during these difficult hours, your presence is the most important thing; it’s just being there. Sit with the person, listen a lot, and say very little. Let the person tell you the details of what happened. Pastor Bob Deffinbaugh shared that Joseph knew. He grieved because death separates us from our loved ones. Joseph knew that he would never be able to talk with his father again in this life. Joseph lived another 54 years. I’m sure there were many times during those years that he longed to talk with his dad about something, but he wasn’t there. It’s that sense of loneliness, of missing the departed person that makes grief linger often for years.

We have to work through our grief to the point where we establish a new normal without the deceased person in our lives, and this process takes time.

Here's another one that I hear. I hear people say, "Don't visit my grave." The pastors I grew up with would say this. "The person is no longer there. They're with the lord." I go visit my grandparents' graves. I don't do that for them; I visit their graves for me. I know good theology. I don't go and pray to them. I don't pray that the Lord does something with their spirit. I just go to remember. I know I'm a wild person. I like to spend a lot of time at cemeteries. I go to reminisce and to think through stories. If visiting a grave helps your grieve, do it. Christians, be very careful as you prescribe this. For some, it seems ridiculous to go to a grave and that's fine; you can have that. But we don't go visit the grave for the person; we go for the one who is grieving.

Here's another one. "Don't send flowers." For some of you, sending flowers is a ridiculous expression and a waste of money. If you are cheap in life, this is probably what you are going to say to your family and friends as they mourn you. But when Debbie Sue passed away, the family asked that you would make a donation and not bring flowers. Yet, why did over 50 bouquets still show up. It's because that's an expression of grief for some people and that's okay.

I was texting for days after we celebrated the life of Debbie Sue and R.P. I would just share things like quotes and all that. One of R.P.'s best lines back to me was "Hey, now shut it; I've got flowers to water." Katie knows. This is why I like R.P. Our sense of humor is very similar. He understands people brought flowers. I met someone in the back that brought in a pot of flowers. I told her I would be happy to take them up front for her, but she wanted to take them herself because that was her way.

We have to be very careful when we talk about grieving that we don't force what we are thinking and feeling upon another person. Here's what I think happens within the church. Grieving is not a sign of spiritual immaturity or a lack of faith. Grieving is part of our humanity.

Funerals are for the living, not for the dead.

This is how we grieve and how we mourn. Pastor Bob Deffinbaugh says it this way. We grieve because death is our enemy. Death is not a natural part of life, as some would have us believe. Death is our enemy. Death entered the human race as God's curse against our sin. Christ conquered death, but that triumph will not be fully realized until he returns to give us resurrection bodies like his own. Death is a painful reminder of God's curse upon our sin. A funeral, a memorial service is a helpful part of the grieving process for the family. It helps to give a sense of closure to the person's life. It's for the living, not the dead.

A huge funeral procession may be important for you and for others not, but whatever you need to grieve. Again, we don't talk about excessive grieving, but we talk about grieving.

As you enter into the second stage of mourning... This is where a lot of people grow uncomfortable. They grieved, they mourned that person, and they went to that person's funeral. Now, I really don't want to say anything. I don't want to talk to R.P. about Debbie Sue because I don't want anything to

come up. I don't want to talk to Norma about Gary. I don't want to talk to Jim about Judi. I want to really careful and sensitive.

A few years ago, I was impacted by a friend of mine in Arkansas who suddenly lost his son. Years ago, his son went from being perfectly healthy to gone in 12 days. Every time you even speak to him of his son, the emotion is still so deep. Here's what he said. I've never forgotten these words when it comes to that second and third stage of grieving. He said, "Please, say my son's name." He would go to church and people wouldn't want to say the name because they didn't want him to cry. He said, "Everywhere I went, when I would go to church especially, I wanted to look at other Christians and say, 'Please, will you call him out by name. I want to hear his name. Tell me a story about something he said or something funny he did. Don't stop saying his name.'"

This is what we call the crucible stage of mourning. This is the stage of mourning that has periodic bouts of depression. For some maybe crying for two to three years after an expected death, let alone a sudden or unexpected loss. Again, as a friend, being there and listening is the most helpful thing you can do. You won't open wounds to mention the person who has died. The grieving person probably feels and needs to talk about their loved one.

The final stage we call the construction stage. This is implied in Chapter 50: 14. Joseph and his brothers return from Egypt where they had left their children and jobs to bury Jacob. In this stage, a person accepts reality and is ready to move on. God has given them a new normal in life. This is all dealing with part of our humanity. So, we can talk more... Amy told me I probably shouldn't do a whole series on death. I had like a 15 part series on death planned out, going through the summer. That would get you excited to come back week after week.

Am I ready to die?

How do I want to die? That's an important question, but here's a bigger question I want you to answer this morning. Are you ready to die? Like Tim Hawkins said, I'm ready to die. Not today; I don't want to go today, but I'm ready.

I haven't asked my mom and dad for permission to share their story, but here we go. There is an argument between the two of them. My mom is ready and she wants no intervention. Right now, she has a "Do Not Resuscitate" bar on her wrist. No, I'm just kidding. But she would wear one. She's very open about this. My mom is very solid in her faith. She knows the Lord. She has family she wants to be with again. I don't know why she wants to leave this family so badly to get to them; I don't know what that says. She is kind of itching to get away from us. Honestly, our fun family is with the Lord.

It's the opposite with my dad. My dad wants to go kicking and screaming. "You do everything possible." I've always struggled with this because I'm their executor and I know what I'm getting after his death, so why would he put me in charge of his death? I've never figured that one out. It'll be bad if right after my parents die, I resign, but it won't have anything to do with the two. My retirement and their death are not connected; I just want you to know that up front.

The reason our family can talk about this and the reason our family can joke about it is because we know. We are ready. At any moment, Lord. If I can't gather with my family, I'm going to make sure I say it all now in case there is an unexpected death.

In Indiana, there is an old tombstone. I love this picture. You should put this on your screen saver at home. Here's what it reads: *"Pause here stranger as you pass by; as you are now, so once was I. As I am now, so shall you be; prepare for death and follow me."* Isn't that a great tombstone? But what I love even more... This is a true story. Someone inscribed on the top of the tombstone these words: *"To follow you, I'm not content until I know which way you went."* Isn't that good?

The scripture is clear in Hebrews 9: 27. ***Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...*** So my question... Yeah, we talked more this morning about how we want to die and some of the considerations around death and grieving, but we end today with the weightier question. Are you ready to die?

I do a lot of funerals and the funerals that are celebrations of life and the joy... Yes, we're mourning, but as 1 Thessalonians 4 says, we are mourning with hope. And you're here today and your family... You've never placed faith in Jesus; you've never made a decision. We would like a good death scene with you. We would like to grieve your death with hope because right now we would grieve as men grieve without hope. So, my question to you, as we enter into a time of the Lord's Supper, is "Is today the day you make the decision to know you are ready for death?"

You may say, "I wasn't ready until I walked in here. I wasn't ready until the Lord and I had a conversation. I understand my need for him. I'm confessing my sin before him." I'm going to ask that you bow with me. We are going to enter into a time of taking the Lord's Supper together as we do on the first weekend of each month.

The scripture says we are to examine our hearts. If you have not placed faith in Jesus, we would love you to take the Lord's Supper with us, as we would love you to place faith in Jesus. If you have not placed faith in Jesus, the scripture says not to participate in this part. We would not have you drink judgment on yourself. But maybe this will be the first Lord's Supper that you take because you placed faith in Jesus this morning.

It's just simply praying, acknowledging before the Lord, confessing with your mouth and believing in your heart that Jesus has been raised from the dead. Yes, death is our enemy, but Jesus has conquered death. Because of Jesus, heaven is our home.

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul says ***23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."***

25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Father, it's in the name of Jesus that we thank you and we remember today the death of our Lord and Savior Jesus, the one who conquered the grave. As we enter into the Easter season, we fill our minds with everything the scripture says about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and Jesus breathing life into dead people, and Jesus breathing life into dead marriages or dead families, and the power that raised Jesus from the dead, and that same power that will resurrect our dead bodies, may we be mindful of the death that freed us from the curse. As by one man, sin entered into the, but it's the death of Jesus that frees us from the penalty of sin, which is death. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. That is what we proclaim today as we take the bread and as we drink from the cup.

Thank you for what you continue to do in this church. I do pray for families that are mourning. We want to be a church that always rejoices with those who rejoice and mourns with those who mourn. I ask for their comfort. I ask for those surrounding them that they would continue to say the name and to speak stories of the one who has passed. Thank you for what you continue to do with this church. We love you and it is in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.