



Light of the World

Part 1 – Hope

Pastor Ted Cunningham

We're looking at Advent. Today, we're starting with the first candle. As the Hill Family shared with us, we're looking at *Hope*. Advent means coming or arrival. For the next four weeks, leading up to Christmas Eve, here's what we're going to be studying. We're going to be studying Hope. Peace is next Sunday, then Joy and Love. And then on Christmas eve, we want you to be a part of our Christmas eve at home. Woodland Hills, for all of those here, it's all going to be online, running for 48 hours Christmas eve and Christmas day. It's a 30 minute, jampacked service that you can stream at any point where we'll be lighting the Christ candle together.

Quick question. How many of you enjoy waiting? Like you really like waiting, like waiting is your favorite, as Elf would say? Nobody likes waiting. Okay, well let me ask you this question. What are you waiting for? We're all waiting for something. I think the most basic way we all wait, and it's my most hated way to wait, and that is waiting in line. I'm not a big fan of waiting in line. I feel like it's a ginormous waste of time. There are other things I could be doing like watching my children grow up, but I'm not a big fan of waiting in line.

We had to go get Carson's driving permit in June and we went up to Nixa because that's where you take the test, and it was closed. So, I go over to the courthouse to ask them where I could take my son to take the test. They said to go to Republic. So, we drive up to Republic. We pull in and the line is in the parking lot, everybody is six feet apart, it's wrapped around. I usually walk up to lines, ask the last person how long they've been there, and then ask the person closest to the door how long they've been there, do the math and figure out whether or not I'm staying. Does anybody else do that math before getting in a line?

Before I couldn't even start doing the math, the lady with the clip board, keeping everybody organized, looked at me and said, "I'd go somewhere else." I asked her where else we could go. She goes, "I'd try Springfield." Because I had all day to give to this driving permit thing, we go to Springfield. We pull up in downtown Springfield and the line is wrapped around the building. I'm like, "Carson, we're definitely going to Aviaary after this and getting us a crepe. We can have whatever we want. We are going to be so entitled after waiting in this line. It was interesting because this was June. The had the military, they had the army in charge of this line. What was going on in our country in June that the army was in charge of the DMV. There were guys standing there in their fatigues in charge of the line. We were waiting outside for over an hour.

We finally get up to him... He's military and he just does the nod to the door. We open the door to another line. That was the line for the elevator and so now we're in a new line and we wait in that line, as we zig zag back and forth across the lobby until our elevator was available to get on. Finally, we get up there and they open the doors and... there is a third line on the second floor, and I want to hurt somebody. Does anybody know what I'm talking about? I am so done.

But then, waiting in traffic. Y'all, I lost my witness a couple of weeks ago... In the Chick-fil-A parking lot, of all places to lose my cool. It was Branson Market Days, and my daughter had a booth. My wife and daughter were working it. I said, "Hey, I'm gong to run to Chick-fil-A and I'll get you guys lunch." When I got there, it started thundering and so they took all the people taking orders and put them inside, so the line got long. I was waiting in line of about five cars before you get to the double line that goes through the drive-thru.

We all know how it works. If you don't know how it works, let me help you his morning. When you go into a bank and there is a single file line, it means the next person is going to the next available teller. How many of you were raised by good parents who taught you that? You always have that one person that walks in and just skips the line altogether, thinking the rules don't apply. That's what was happening in the Chick-fil-A parking lot. We were waiting and as soon as a car... We didn't want to block the drive. As soon as a car would pull up, this car would pull in and we'd all move up.

This white Ford Explorer... I wrote down the license plate. No... I didn't write down the license plate. He's creeping along and I'm thinking he's just going to go up to McDonalds here and turn left and go the back street down into town. Nope. He was creeping and creeping... He saw the line. There were probably 10 cars at this point going all the way back to the Casey's right there. The car moved and he zipped in front of one of the cars.

Y'all, something happened in my system. My since of justice kicked in and it wasn't a toot of the horn, I laid on the horn in God's chicken's parking lot. I was like, *I can't believe I just did that*. I immediately called Kevin Hutchison, the owner/operator, and I said, "I need to confess to you. That road rage in your parking lot that you just heard was me." He goes, "We were wondering what that was." I go, "Please forgive me and promise me you won't serve the white Ford Explorer that's in the drive right there. I saw him. Kevin came out and I rolled the window down and I pointed to it. I said, "You make him do a lap because we're going to teach him." How many believe it's our job as Christians to teach other drivers. That's because again, waiting in line and again, when you're waiting for waffle fries, it's a little bit better, but you always think of something else you could do.

There are young people in here maybe home from college and you're waiting on a date. You heard that he likes you; multiple friends have told you that. You're waiting for the phone call. Some of you are waiting on marriage. As I prayed this week for our church, as I pray everyday for our church, I just sat down and I started thinking about how are people in our church right now waiting? There are many in our church who are waiting on a job. And many have been waiting for more than a year. I know many are watching online and you've taken jobs until the job you're looking for comes along. But it's been a long season of waiting.

Some are waiting on test results. There are some waiting on test results after being to the oncologist. There are others who are waiting on a COVID test right now. Isn't interesting how much we've had to wait, how long we've had to wait in this season when we have plans, but we really can't move forward with those plans until we find out what the test is. For some, you've waited 48 -72 hours and that was a long 48-72 hours for a test.

Everybody watching and everybody on campus today is waiting on normal. We're told normal may come around September or October or maybe late summer. And none of us know what normal looks like or when it's going to get here, but we're waiting on it. In this season, the birth of Christ, we talk about the Advent, the coming of the Lord with anticipation and preparation for it. There are many in our church who are waiting on the birth of a child. There are some who are waiting to conceive a child. All of us are waiting on the coming of the Lord.

Today, we look in Isaiah. If you have your bibles, turn to Isaiah 8. We're going to be in Chapters 8 and 9. When you see this Old Testament prophecy, Isaiah did not see two comings of the Lord. He didn't see a first and a second advent, which is what we're living in. We're the in between people. We live in between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ. And in Isaiah 9, the prophecy that Isaiah gives toward the people of Judah, he's explaining this coming of the Lord, but he just sees it as one coming. We're going to separate that this morning and see that yes, we have the birth of Christ and his ministry upon the earth and then his coming a second time, reigning in the Millennial Kingdom.

A friend of mine, Bill Brooks... Does anybody remember Bill and Randy Brooks? I used to have coffee with them. Randy was here a couple of weeks ago. Randy played Jesus in The Promise. I loved The Promise, the story of the life of Jesus. He was here a couple of weeks ago sitting a few rows back behind my parents. We were talking to them and I looked up and I saw Randy and I just had a moment. I looked at him and I... He hadn't been here for years because he's lived in New York the past nine years. I looked at him and I said, "We'd been longing for your return." He just got a chuckle. I said, "How many of us right now this has been a season, as last week we looked at the Crown of Righteousness for those who endure and for those who long for the coming of the Lord.

To us, waiting seems like a waste of time. Pastor Louie Giglio, Compassion City Church in Atlanta shared. It seems like we could be doing something else with this time. What are we supposed to get out of the waiting? Often times we think of waiting in terms of minutes, hours, days. Today, the birth announcement we see in Isaiah 9, the birth announcement to the birth of Christ is some 700 years. Don't think in terms of days, weeks, months, or years, think in terms of centuries. *For us, waiting is wasting. To God, waiting is working.* The silence between the Old Testament and the New Testament a period of about 400 years... We can look at that and think God was silent during this time. But don't ever mistake God silence as God is not working. God is working.

In Ecclesiastes 3, we read, ***11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*** And even when the Old Testament prophets would prophecy, they would speak the Word of the Lord that was given to them, but even they could not see it all play out from beginning to end. And Isaiah is in this time gap in the prophesy that he's going to give today.

In Galatians 4, we read the Christmas story as it's set in time, but when the set time, the appointed time... Ecclesiastes also says there is an appointed time to be born, an appointed time to plant, an appointed time to uproot, an appointed time to mourn, an appointed time to dance.

Galatians 4 says, ***4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.***

And before we see the picture that Isaiah paints in Isaiah 8, we have to get the background from 2 Chronicles 28 from King Ahaz. Here's what we read about the context of Isaiah 8-9: ***1 Ahaz (the king of Judah) was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord. 2 He followed the ways of the kings of Israel and also made idols for worshiping the Baals. 3 He burned sacrifices in the Valley of Ben Hinnom and sacrificed his children in the fire, engaging in the detestable practices... God drove the nations out that engaged in these detestable practices so that his children would not follow suit, but King Ahaz followed suit. ...of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. 4 He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree.***

When you read about how far he removed himself that the people from the true worship of the only true living God, when you see how far he's removed and when he's in this trouble, the scripture says that the Lord delivered him into the hands of the King of Aram and then he delivered him into the hands of the King of Israel. They had terrible losses, many casualties, many of the people taken prisoner. What do you do when you find yourself in trouble? When you and I find ourselves in difficult situations, when we find ourselves afflicted, it's supposed to lead us to repentance. It's supposed to turn our hearts back to God, but that's not what happened with King Ahaz. **King Ahaz denied the Word of God and pursued political alliances instead.** So, instead of turning to the living God, what does he do? He goes to the Kings of Assyria, the scripture says, to look for help and what does he find? More trouble and more affliction.

Today, as we talk about darkness and light, we are going to see this is how many of us live today. We live in darkness, then we consult the darkness for direction for our life and then we're shocked when we're still in the darkness. We're going to look at what it means to live in the light, that Jesus is the light, and how Jesus is the one who brings light to the darkness.

So, take this background from 2 Chronicles 28 and look at Isaiah 8. What I really want us to do today, as you read this, is to see how this relates to what we're going through today in our nation and in our world. There is so much here that is parallel to our day. In the first verse we'll look at, Verse 19, you're going to see how far they have removed themselves from true worship of God. In the next verse, you're going to see what they can do to return to the true worship of God. Then you're going to see they didn't do that, and the last two verses are the consequences of that.

Isaiah says of their situation, ***19 When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?*** In other words, you have access to the living God. Why would you consult the dead? I just want to encourage you. If you are in here and you think the horoscope means something, it means nothing.

Put it away and turn to the living God. If you want to speak to loved ones who have died... If you believe you are speaking to a loved one who has died, please understand that it is a demon imitating that loved one. He's saying, this is how far it's gotten. We're seeking advice and counsel from darkness.

20 Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. Go back to the first five books, go back to the law in this day. ***If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.*** Don't seek to get anything out of them. Don't consult the darkness. And then Verses 21 and 22 are the consequences of what happens when you consult the darkness.

21 Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward... They won't look to God for help. They're not looking to the king for help. No, they're looking to the king and they're looking to God to blame. And if ever there was a time in our country that we need to break out of this victim mentality, this everything going wrong with me has been brought against me and we're shaking our fists at leaders and we're shaking our fists at God. ***They will curse their king and their God. 22 Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.*** Meaning if you consult the dead, the scripture is saying you will end up with them. This is so important.

I heard a football player say on Thursday. I know what he was trying to say when he was talking about the healing of our land or the healing of our nation, but he made this comment: "I am putting my faith in humanity." I want to make sure anybody in the room with me understands that's a bad decision. Humanity is what got us into this. Don't put your hope in humanity, put your hope in Jesus. Put your faith in Jesus. He is the light. Don't listen to Oprah. Stop cuddling your inner self. Your inner self is a mess. But this is what happened. If you're going to consult the darkness, if you're going to stay in the darkness, you're going to be angry, you're going to be frustrated, they'll be no direction for your life.

Some of you are like, "This is the most cheerful Christmas message I've ever heard in my life. Can we get back to the birth of Jesus please?" We're getting there.

But if you want to walk in light, you've got to see the context. We often jump to Isaiah 9: 6, but we have to see the context of it and what was going on, the darkness that was on the land.

If you want to walk in light, stop consulting the darkness. I drove my parents crazy and I know they are watching today from home. I drove them crazy as a kid when my parents brought wisdom to me. Young people, I want to remind you that Mom and Dad have years upon this earth and it's brought them wisdom. You should probably trust them more than your 14-year-old friend. But it drove my parents crazy when my dad would be instructing me on how to do taxes, how to spend money, how to save money, how to give, and I would go, "But Bobby said..." My dad would be like, "Stop it! Bobby doesn't know!!"

This what I love about what Dave Ramsey said. He said, "If you're looking for financial advice, stop asking your broke friends." If you want to walk in light, stop seeking the darkness. If you want to walk in light, stop consulting the darkness for your life. Darkness, as we just read in Isaiah 8, leaves you empty and angry. You'll be enraged.

We have seen darkness this year. We have seen people putting their hope in all the wrong people and all the wrong stances. Our hope is in Jesus while we wait. **Darkness offers no direction for your life.** That last verse of Isaiah 8 said what? You will end up in utter darkness. If you consult darkness, you'll stay in darkness. If you consult the dead, you'll be among the dead. Then you'll start blaming others. You'll shake your fist at the king. You'll shake your fist at a president. You'll shake your fist at a senator. You'll shake your fist at God. Darkness blames others for your frustration.

If you want to walk in light, I want to encourage you to find some friends who regularly speak the Word of God, like it comes out of their mouths. Find that friend who knows the Bible, who studies the Bible, reads the Bible, you can trust what they are saying because they've built their life upon the Word of God. Find that person if you want to walk in light.

Some of you come from families of darkness. No one was a believer in your family. The scripture says before you place faith in Jesus, you are a child of darkness. But once you place faith in Jesus, you become a child of God. You are adopted into the family of God. Some of you just came from a family holiday where now you realize, "Am I the only light in my family?" Yes. And be that light without consulting the family that you're in if its darkness.

If you want to walk in light, consult those who call you to repentance. You need that friend that when you're complaining about your spouse, when you're complaining about your ex-spouse, when you're complaining about a family member, a boss... I know everybody wants the friend that will vent with you, that will complain with you, but do you have a friend that's able to point the finger back at you and say, "What are you doing to change? How are you changing?"

I know something weird is going on in the church. Not just our church; I just see it around the country. I think the label you'd probably put on it is progressive Christianity. And if you want to know if I'm a progressive Christian, the answer would be no. I don't feel I fall in line with progressive Christians. Here's what I see kind of happening. I'm called to love my neighbor. I'm called to love my enemies. But I am not called to be one with them. I'm not called to join them.

I hear everybody using phrases like "love the world" and "find common ground" and I'm just going to be very careful because when Jesus prayed "Father, as you and I are one, make them one." He's talking to the church, not our nation. People say, "Ted, you need to lighten up on your beliefs a little bit and kind of come to the center with people and their beliefs." I don't have any plans on doing that... none.

In 2 Corinthians 6, Paul says, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers." This is not just a verse for dating. If you grew up in a Baptist church, you think Paul was talking to daters. No, he's not. He's talking to believers. You can't work at the same pace, you can't move forward in life if you are consulting unbelievers for how you should live. And this weirdness going on with our beliefs...

I have a friend... I might as well go there. I didn't share it in the first service, but let's go. You know I am passionate... and it's the number one on my list when it comes to voting pro-life. And I have a friend who is equally pro-life. We got into a conversation this week... and he's a believer, pro-life. We have very different ways... It was a really interesting conversation because I come from a tradition and I'm

wanting to learn and grow all the ways we can end abortion in our country. I'm passionate about that. If you grew up in a conservative church, your primary ways for ending abortion in the country are through the Supreme Court and defunding Planned Parenthood. But there are more ways than just that. I'm asking the Lord to give me wisdom on it because my friend, who is as passionate pro-life as I am, said, "Ted, but it's also... if you want to get rid of abortion in our country, let's find ways to decrease poverty, increase access to education, increase access to health care." He was having a conversation that some of you right now are going, "I don't like hearing that." But there are other ways to do it. But my friend and I can have that conversation because we're both believers in Christ Jesus and we both share essential beliefs.

But I'm here to tell you that you can love your neighbor, you can love your enemies without joining them in what they believe. I hear this all the time: "I just want to show them love." Love them, but don't be yoked with them. The scripture says, "For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?" Or what fellowship can light have with darkness. The answer is you can't. What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? Church, we are called to be one as Jesus and the Father are one. That's what he prayed. He prayed that for his disciples, and he prayed for those who would follow. That's us. We can love unbelievers, we can love those who are lost; we welcome them into our church gatherings that they would find the light and step out of darkness.

We're getting to light now. We had to establish darkness. Darkness has been fully established. And then when you get to Isaiah 9, this is the hope. And I want to remind you what he's going to prophecy is hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years before the first coming of Jesus. Not days, weeks, months, as you and hate waiting that long. We have a bigger picture in Isaiah 9: 2. Here's where the hope begins to shine. **2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light...** He begins to prophecy. **...on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.** And his name is Jesus. He is our hope.

In Isaiah 9: 6 we read, **6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called...** We are going to get four names for Jesus, descriptions of his character. For those of you who are walking in darkness right now, these are names to bring you good news. **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** Wonderful counselor is again seeking direction for your life. Stop consulting the darkness; go to Jesus.

Wonderful Counselor – He will speak... When Isaiah prophesied this... He is going to speak and people will want to listen. In the Millennial Kingdom, Jesus will speak and we will be hanging on his every word. We'll have a desire to hear from him. We should have that desire now. And this is good news for the lost who need guidance. There are many ways that seem right to a man, but in the end, they lead to destruction. For some of you, that's been the course of your entire life. But today, Jesus is good news for you who are lost, that you would find direction and guidance for your life.

Mighty God – we've said it here and are very clear. Jesus is God. He's not just a good teacher, he's not just a good man; he is God and he is all-powerful. This is great news. This is good news. This is amazing news for the weak who need strength. For some of you, we talked about that in *The Great Race* for

endurance. Some of you need that strength right now. Don't look to your humanity for it. Don't consult the darkness for it. Cry out to the living God for it.

Everlasting Father – this can be confusing sometimes when you read this. Why would Jesus be called Everlasting Father? This is not speaking of his relation to the Trinity; it's speaking of his care for us forever, how a father cares for his kids. This is good news for the lonely who need acceptance. Every holiday season between thanksgiving and New Year's, we talk about the family tables where there is an empty chair. Our family in Minnesota has an empty chair this year. We lost Uncle Wayne to COVID. Many of you have lost family during this season. I spend time... Wednesday, I will be with a widow from our church. The widows and the widowers of our church tell you that this is a very difficult and challenging season. There is an empty chair.

But I also want us to think about the empty chair that is at a lot of tables today because of divorce. It's going to be very difficult holidays for many individuals because the spouse is no longer there, but it's also multiple chairs if this is not their year for the children. There will be empty chairs and loneliness will set in. Don't consult the darkness with that loneliness. Don't call that jaded friend who will rail on that ex-spouse with you. You turn to your everlasting Father. He provides acceptance for the lonely.

Prince of Peace – we'll talk more about this next week. The Prince of Peace, good news for the broken and unsettled who need rest and reconciliation. Consulting the darkness for you for years has meant broken relationship, broken relationship, broken relationship. The Prince of Peace will settle all of that. You will have peace in your heart, in your life, in your relationships.

We get to Isaiah 9: 7. I've been praying a lot this week about this verse because if you just read the first few words – ***7 Of the greatness of his government...*** I don't think Jesus is going to make red hats in the Millennial Kingdom. That went over the first service's heads too. But of the greatness of his government ***...and peace there will be no end.*** Thinking about how many people are waiting right now. I am also thinking about the people who are very frustrated right now with the direction of our country. Today, I hope this message... I hope directly from the Word of God, you will leave here with great hope. Yes, we live in a nation that we're all passionate about, but I have a dual citizenship. I'm a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven and a citizen of the United States of America. And my citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven trumps (pardon the pun) my citizenship of the United States. And my hope is in Christ fully.

Now we're getting into the second coming. ***He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom...*** For 1,000 years, and we are longing for this day. ***...establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.*** So much there to unpack, but I just want to encourage those of you who are dealing with a lot of frustration right now. I believe it's in our church and please hear this from a heart of a pastor who loves you. Yes, you have a pastor who jokes a lot and picks on both sides of the aisle, but please hear this. Let the Lord minister to you with his Word this morning. I believe for many in here there is a misplaced hope and that has caused great frustration for you. Misplaced hope leads to unmet expectations. "This is what I expect, this is what I want, but this is what I'm getting." Gary Smalley taught us for years that the gap between those two... the bigger the gap, the more stress you have. And stress is a socially acceptable term for anger. You're mad.

Many of you today are mad, frustrated, and there are some things I want to remind you about concerning the United States Government. Firstly, it will not last forever. Some expect from the United States government what only Jesus will bring in his. I also want to encourage you with this: The United States Government is not perfect. The Kingdom of Jesus, where he will reign, is perfect. And it will be brought about by the zeal of God Almighty and it will be forever.

I had a professor in college who is very passionate. He had this crazy thought... I'm not here to debate this, but I just have to kind of set it up. He didn't believe there was a need for prisons in our country and he taught that everything can be handled... Biblically, he was an Old Testament covenant theologian. He believed everything could be handled through restitution or retribution. You pay back what you steal or you're put to death. Again, we covered the death penalty in the opening of our Christmas series at Woodland Hills. I have no idea how we've covered so many of these topics, but it fits.

So, students would debate him. I always loved the debates. I wasn't much to ask questions in class. I didn't debate professors. I'll just never forget it. He was a humble guy. He was a covenant theologian. He would be asked, "We can't have the death penalty because it might take someone out who is innocent." All he would say is, "Well, there's no perfect system." But the debate was over; there's no more conversation. "There are people in prison who are innocent." He would go, "Again, there's no perfect system."

For those of you who are looking for that here upon this earth, a perfect government... I shared it the other week. **If you're frustrated right now that the government is not meeting all your needs, it's a good reminder that the government is not supposed to meet all of your needs.** It's a good reminder that the government is not where you place your hope. As we're talking about waiting, where you place your hope while you wait determines whether you walk in darkness or light. And some just need to turn back now from the darkness and place their hope in Jesus.

If God has called you to work in government and God has called you to work through policy and legislation, we support you, we encourage you. I was headed that direction before God called me to be a pastor. We support you, we encourage you, but please never forget we do all our work as unto the Lord. He is our hope. And wherever you are at today, whether it's an empty table or an empty chair at the table, whether it's frustration towards what's going on in our nation or the direction the nation may or may not take, I just want to encourage everyone. Our future is bright because Jesus is the light. Please don't forget this. Gary Smalley called this picturing a special future. We need to be reminded and that's what Christmas does. We wait for the Lord with anticipation and excitement and preparation that our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not in human leaders. It's not in our humanity. It's not in what we can accomplish in a season or not, or within a four-year period of time. We need a longer end game. We need a longer perspective when it comes to what we are doing while we wait. We are hoping in the Lord.

We read in John 8: 12, ***When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."***

If you are walking in darkness this morning, today is the day you confess your sins, you repent. We plead with you to step out of the darkness and into the light of Jesus, to receive Jesus as your Lord and savior. That's what I love about the bumper video. It's so creative how the team put that together as the light in the houses started going. You may be the only light in your family this season. I'm not going to make you sing the song, but a lot of us sang it growing up. "Hide it under bushel? NO!" I'm going to be the light in the darkness. I'm going shine the light in my family. If you come from a family of origin that is full of darkness, bitterness, anger, rage, shaking fists at leaders and shaking fists at God, that you would step out of the darkness and into the light, the light of the world, Jesus.

For those of you that place faith in Jesus that maybe your hope has been misplaced, that today would be a recalibrating morning for you. That you would begin to recalibrate your life and understanding you've been moving too much to the darkness, looking to the darkness for answers when we know Jesus is the light and brings direction for life. Psalm 27: 14 says, ***Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.***

Father, we thank you for this morning, we thank you for how you continue to work in our church. May our hope not be misplaced but be fully in you. We trust and we wait. It's not a sad waiting, but great anticipation for the arrival, the coming of the Lord. We celebrate that this season, stepping out of the darkness and into the light, the light that is Jesus.

For the one that has never placed faith in Jesus, that today would be the day of their salvation, that they would meet with someone here, and place faith alone in Christ alone.

For the one with misplaced hope, that today would be the day they recalibrate their lives with Jesus at the center.

We pray all of this in the name of Jesus, and everyone agreed and said... Amen.