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Title: 212: *Celebration*

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Speaker: Kurt Bjorklund

Good morning. It is good to be together here in Wexford, in the Strip District, Butler, Southpointe, and online. I know I have said this more frequently in recent months, but there really is nowhere I'd rather be today than here with all of you and have a chance just to be a part of this time.

So, let's pray together. God, as we are gathered, coming from different experiences over the last week, different perspectives, God, I pray that you would speak to each of us in these moments, whether we come here with heavy hearts or joyful hearts. God, I pray that my words would reflect your word in content, tone, and emphasis. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

When you have a moment to reflect on the church, what is it that comes to mind? My guess is that a lot of us don't think a ton about it. But the fact that you're participating in a church service today means that you've thought about it, at least some. Is this worth my time? Is this not worth my time? Do I like this? Do I not like this? But, here's my guess. When many of us think about church, we think about some negative experiences that maybe we had in the past or somebody else had. Or maybe we think about the ineffectiveness of the church as a whole, or its inefficiencies, or maybe some of the irritating aspects of church.

And at least some of us will say when I read my Bible and what happened in Acts, and then I look at the modern church, I have to at least ask the question, why are the two not more similar than what it seems like they are? And there can be a tendency sometimes to do this, and that is to say, well, if the church isn't all that it maybe was in the New Testament, and if it has some scandals and some inefficiencies and some ineffectiveness in its DNA and its wake, then maybe I can do spiritual life without the church.

In fact, there have been a lot of people in recent days who've said, I'm spiritual, but I'm not religious. I believe in God, but I don't do church. And sometimes that's because, again, there's been a past hurt. There was something that happened. And they just say, I can just do God in my own spiritual life without any kind of community.

And over the last couple of years, there's probably been an increase in many of us thinking, I can do spiritual life without church. I can get good teaching by dialing it up

online. I can do community with my friends. I can have some worship music as I drive. I can do the whole package on my own. Do I really need anything more than this?

Well, we started a series a couple of weeks ago, which is part of the ongoing study of the book of First Corinthians that we've called 212. And the idea is simply this, as we change spiritually and as water changes to steam at a certain temperature, our spiritual temperature brings about change at a certain level. And here's just where First Corinthians is as it moves into chapters 12, 13, and 14.

And that is it's talking about what it calls the body or the church and how essential the church is to our spiritual life. And so, what I'd like to do today is spend some time just talking about this. But if you're a person who says, yeah, but the church is kind of messed up, maybe I'll do a little bit of church here and there, but I don't need a lot of church, let me just remind you that the Corinthian church was messed up.

If you've been here, you know, as we've worked our way through First Corinthians, that there have been a lot of issues here, just a few that are mentioned in First Corinthians here, some of the dysfunction. The church was divided over personalities and preferences. In chapter one, the church was characterized by spiritual pride. It's in chapters 1, 2, and 4. There was significant spiritual immaturity in the church in chapter 3.

In chapter 5, there were people who were using relationships as sexually exploitative ways to relate to others in coming to church and acting like it was no big deal. In chapter 6, some of the people within the church community had such stark disagreements that they were filing lawsuits against one another. There was sexual promiscuity within the church, chapter 6, verse 12 and following. In chapter 7, there were marriages that were struggling and people were giving up on marriage before they really had rationale or reason to do so.

In chapter 8 there was freedom from concern about how people's spiritual lives or their practical lives impacted others. And then there were human rules that were restricting ministry in chapter 9. And there was a lack of concern for how the church's ministry and life was impacting the broader community in chapter 10.

That's some of what was going on. And here's why I tell you that. If you are somebody who feels like you are the one who has figured out that the church is messed up, you're not alone. It goes all the way back to the original church in the New Testament. And the picture of the church in Acts is this nice idyllic picture. The picture of the church in Corinth is a jacked-up, messed-up church. And it doesn't take a lot to stand

on the sideline and go, oh, that's not very good, as it does to say what would it look like to see things be different?

And so, here's what we get when we come to Chapter 12. Chapter 12 begins with this phrase. It says, "Now about the gifts of the spirit, brothers and sisters." Now we read and teach from the NIV here at Orchard Hill, and we have various reasons for that. I think there's a podcast in our *Perspectives* feed or *Ask a Pastor* feed that talks about why that version.

But here's a place where the NIV makes a doctrinal translation. And what I mean by that is the word that's used here, it says now concerning, and in Greek, the word is spirituals. And it's not the same word that's typically used for gifts. Typically, the word that's used for spiritual gifts is the word charisma. That's where you get the idea of charismatic gifts. This is a different word.

This is a word that hearkens back to earlier discussions in First Corinthians, and this could refer to spiritual gifts. So, it's not a wrong translation to say now concerning spiritual gifts, but it could also be about spiritual people. What he's doing, I think, is he's saying now about spiritual, spiritual matters, spiritual people, because there was a group of people in the Corinthian church who were saying, I'm spiritual and other people are not spiritual. And now he's about to say, I want to tell you what genuine spirituality looks like.

And then in verse 2, he says, "You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols." It seems like something archaic in our day and age, but what he's doing, at least in part here, is he's saying when you didn't believe, you worshiped all kinds of things. There's no such thing as not worshipping.

You may say, I don't worship God, but it doesn't mean you don't worship. You worship something. Whether it's your identity, reputation, culture, body, affluence, or experiences. You worship something. And he's saying he used to worship things that didn't have much value. "Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit."

So, what he does here very simply is he says there are some who want to say that you're spiritual without fruit. But he's saying when you're really spiritual, the fruit of it is that you begin to worship and obey and reverence, Jesus. That when you really come to understand what Jesus Christ has done, that it isn't about what you do, but Jesus, He becomes your Lord because you say, if He loved me so much that He saved

me when I didn't deserve it, then how could I do other than make Him the object of my affection? That's part of what he's doing.

And then in verse 7, he says this. And this is the outline, I think, for this whole section. He says, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." And I say this is an outline because there are two truths that this points to. The first is that the church needs you.

Each one has been given a manifestation of the spirit. So, he does talk about gifts here in verses 4, 5, and 6, and then again in verses 8 and following. He says, you, as you are, have been given a gift, a capacity that matters and if it isn't brought to bear, then the common good isn't as strong as it would be. And so, the church needs each person to bring its gifts, perspective, and passion to bear for the life of the church, to be what it is. And any failure to do so is a way to not understand how God intended the church to function.

You see, the church is God's "A" plan in this world. He doesn't have a "B" plan. He doesn't have another way that he intends to show the world His glory. It is through the church, and so the church needs you. But then we also see in this verse that you need the church because it says to each one is given a manifestation of the spirit for the common good. You and I benefit from other people bringing themselves to the community because we're part of the common good.

So, here's what he says in verse 4, "There are different kinds of gifts." Again, this is the word charisma. So now he's talking very specifically about gifts of the spirit, but the same spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of workings, but in them all and in everyone, it's the same God at work.

And so, what he does here is he says, everybody has a gift, a spiritual gift that's for the good of all. And there are different types of services. And so just because you have the same gift doesn't mean that you use it in the same way. And there are different kinds of workings and different kinds of impacts that each of these gifts has.

And he goes and he lists the gifts here in verses 8-11. Now, there are several gift lists throughout the New Testament, and depending on exactly how you count, there are 19 or 26 different gifts and he lists several of them here. And this can become a debated section of scripture because of the idea of are these referring to unique charismatic manifestations of the Spirit of God or are they something else. And I'm not going to take the time to explore all of that today. But let me just tell you what

each of these gifts are as I understand them, and you can debate this in your life group.

So, the first is a message of wisdom, which one translation, the REB says, is put our deepest knowledge into words. Some people see knowledge of a word, or a message of wisdom as being something that God gives. And then you speak like this supernatural impromptu moment. And I'm not saying that it isn't that, but what I'm saying is that this could also be a whole mind, and speaking intuitively and practically about the wisdom that God has for a particular situation.

A message of knowledge is probably more technical, and Anthony Thiselton in his commentary on this says this about message of wisdom, message of knowledge, he says, "To restrict these phrases to an ad hoc message to an individual about their condition would be to diminish the gospel-centered and contextually determine content and to overlay them with a specific tradition of modern thought."

And what he is simply saying is this, and that is that these words of wisdom, words of knowledge, message of wisdom, message of knowledge were understood by people at that time to be broader teaching, not necessarily just an impromptu message. I'm not saying that's off the table entirely, but that is one way to understand that faith, here, I don't believe is speaking of salvation, but is a robust, optimistic view of events that will bring hope in times of trouble.

What faith is, is it's when something happens and you have somebody around you who helps you turn your attention to God rather than to despair. I think it was Tony Evans who once put it this way. He said faith is believing that God was telling the truth. Simply that what you read, you can believe.

Then there are gifts of healings. And here in the original language, it's plural, both gifts, and healings. So certainly, God can and does do miraculous healings. But again, this doesn't necessarily mean just that, because gifts of healings, plural, could be referring to the work of medicine, the work of emotional healing, or to the work of wholeness being brought to life. Miraculous powers, again, has the word miraculous supplied, because in the original language it just means to see something work itself out and is probably, in my view, more of a statement of effective leadership than it is somebody who walks around doing an abracadabra miracle kind of a thing.

Prophecy is to tell forth a divine word. And this is one that, again, is debated in modern Christian circles. Some people believe that a prophecy means God spontaneously gives you a word, much like they may think message of wisdom, message of knowledge, and that you speak it with the authority of God. I would say

that what prophecy is, is it's something less than teaching, authoritative teaching in the church, like is happening here and now. But it is something in which you or somebody says, I believe that this scripture applies and you see it and you speak it into a moment. And that is really taking what God has already revealed and speaking that in a moment. And this could be extemporaneous. It could be prepared. Distinguishing between the spirits, again, is plural, speaking about different kinds of spirits.

And then we get tongues and interpretation of tongues, and we'll certainly spend a little more time on tongues and the interpretation of tongues when we come to Chapter 14. But let me just say this, tongues are again something that has caused a lot of different debate in the church. A lot of different churches will say that in order to have a manifestation of the spirit, you have to speak in tongues, meaning some unknown language to you. Probably an unknown language to any human being and that means you have the Holy Spirit.

Here at Orchard Hill, we believe that you get all of the Holy Spirit when you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and that there's not a second work that is manifest through tongues. And if you read tongues in Acts as being a known language, which is very clear in Acts 2, and if you read it that way throughout the New Testament, it makes perfect sense, as does the interpretation of tongues.

Now, that's not to say that you can't read in First Corinthians a prayer language as much as it is to say that at least some of the modern working out of tongues should involve a known language because it would be unmistakable if somebody came into an assembly like this, spoke a known human language that they didn't know, and somebody else stood up and said, oh, I recognize that, and said, that's this, and then they spoke the message. We'd all go, wow, the Holy Spirit just showed up.

But when it's an unknown tongue to anybody, nobody has any idea if the televangelist is just making stuff up and then interpreting his or her own little moment and saying, this is what God told me, and it was that you should all give us \$10,000 so that your money will grow ten times. And you say, I'm not sure that was God.

Now, the reason that I go through this list quickly is just to say, what Paul does here is he says, all of us have gifts. And again, this is just a partial list. And he says, you have something to bring to the congregation. It might be leadership, it might be speaking, but it might be something where you come and your personality and your passion and your availability bring something to bear.

And what's easy to do in church culture is to become a consumer rather than a contributor, to be a spectator rather than a partner. And what's really easy when we're consumers is to sit and say, I consume, and then I become critical of what is or isn't happening. And then if something looks better, maybe I decide that I need to make a change to somewhere else, and then I start the whole process again.

Now, again, I'm not saying that there's not a time to make a move or isn't a time for a transition. But what I'm trying to really say is that if the church isn't what you believe the church should be, withdrawing from the church and failing to invest in the church will never help that church become what it can be or should be.

So, if you say the church doesn't do enough for the poor or the church doesn't care enough about justice, or the church doesn't, the church isn't, the reason the church doesn't or isn't could be that there are bad structures or bad leadership. But it could also be that when you look in the mirror, you're saying, I'm not part of it. Somebody else should fix it.

And not only that, when you're part of a church community, you bring yourself to bear and your passions and your gifts make a difference. And you may be here saying, well, I don't know about that. I'm just barely keeping it together in my life. Or I'm young. I'm not even sure exactly what I believe. But the way the church is intended to work is that as all people who believe come together, there's something that happens that is for the common good.

A week and a half or so ago, my wife and I drove to Michigan, where we lived for ten years, and I pastored a church there before I came to Pittsburgh some 17 years ago. And as we left there, we had decided when we left that we would very rarely, if ever, go back for funerals or weddings. We just said, you know, it's hard to do that and be fully present here. And so, we just didn't do a lot of that. But the man who died was a really good friend of ours and a dear member of that church for us. And so, we went back to the funeral.

And it was interesting to be kind of put back into a church community we had been so deeply a part of and then have been away from for so long. It felt a little bit like a high school reunion. Not that I've ever gone to a high school reunion, but it felt a little bit like that where you're seeing all these people and you're saying, wow, I didn't remember, but that's your name and all kinds of strange things.

But one of the events that happened was there was a guy who I knew really well who I had been a friend with. And after we left the church, he left the church, but he was here for the funeral. And so, he came up and I asked him, I said, oh, so I hear you that

you've left the church. Where are you going? And he said, well, we've kind of gone over to this church. And he said, but I got to tell you, and I don't know if it was the anonymity of I'm out of town, it's the visiting padre in town, felt like a confessional booth, or what it is exactly. But he said, yeah, we kind of stopped going.

I said, really? And he said, yeah, you know, during the pandemic, we just found that we really like this one church online. And so, we've been watching it online and we really like it. And again, I don't know if he was just kind of confessing to me because I was safe at that moment. And I said, huh. And here's why I said huh. And I didn't challenge him because it wasn't my place at that moment. I hadn't seen the guy in ten years. I hadn't talked to him in a while. But here's what I thought. The church is missing out if you're sitting at home because this is a great guy with so much to offer, and he has failed to see that. The church needs him to bring his gifts, to bring his talents in tangible and intangible ways.

If we ever want to see God work in some of the ways that you read about in the New Testament, it will not happen without a group of people saying, I'm committed to helping the church be what the church is called to be. And if you or I just simply say I'm sitting this one out, then we can be critics and we can say, here's what's wrong. But it doesn't take a lot to do that. It takes a lot more to put your feet down and say, how can I help this place be what God has called it to be?

And you may say, well, you know, Orchard Hill, I'm not sure that's my church. I'm not sure church is my thing. Well, if you're not sure church is your thing, can I just say get clear about who Jesus Christ is because he's called you to be a part of the church. And if you're not sure about Orchard Hill, I understand that.

And if God has led you somewhere else, then plant your feet there. But don't let serial critique keep you from saying I'm putting my feet down to be part of what God is doing. Because God has called each person to bring the manifestation of the Spirit God has given them for the common good. So, the Church needs you.

But here's the second truth that we see, and that is you need the church. Now, you may say, well, do I really need the church? Can't I do it online? Can't I do stuff on my own? Can't I select my group of friends and do community that way? Why do I need the church? Well, it says here, again, to each one, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

And in verse 12 and following, we're given this extended analogy, which we'll look at next week about the body, about how the hand and the foot need each other. And what you know is that if one part of your body doesn't function correctly, it impacts

the entire body. If you hurt your knee, you hurt your little toe, you hurt something in your body, then your body doesn't function the way that it is. And what that means is that you and I will not function the way we're intended to function without the whole.

In fact, if you read through chapter 12, verse 12, and following, what you see is that one of the things it says is that the parts of the body that we think are less honorable are actually to be given special honor. That we need to understand that part of being in a community is saying it's not just the people that I like that I do life with, but by doing life with some people that aren't like me and I don't necessarily like what happens, is God uses that to form me and to form character in me in a way that can't happen otherwise. And what we need, again, the manifestation of the spirit, these different gifts, is we need to hear the perspective of people who are not just like us. We need to see the example of people who are not just like us.

And again, we took this trip and saw some old friends and it caused Faith and me to reflect on the last 27 years of church life for us, and where I've served as a pastor. And here's what I can tell you, and that is some of our sweetest moments came when there were people who would say things, model things, and serve in ways that brought something to us that we didn't know we needed until after the fact.

And we have seen that here at Orchard Hill. We've seen it when we lived in Michigan, that what happens is sometimes there's somebody who's ahead of you in marriage and you need the modeling or the word to stay at it when you don't feel like it. Sometimes there's somebody who's ahead of you or alongside you when you're parenting and they'll say something and you'll say, wow, I didn't understand.

And if you're around people, it will shape you. And we've had people who've helped us understand things that we needed to understand about money and things that we needed to understand about how to live day after day. And what we all need is people who are ahead of us, alongside us, and people who are behind us chronologically, because it creates a sense of need.

But not only that, I think you see here that there's a need for support. And that's what, again, this body imagery really points to, because you may say, well, I have friends and family and that's enough, but I believe that God intended us to have a larger church family as well.

There is an article that appeared on *The Ringer*. *The Ringer* is a sports website and pop culture website that I waste time on. And there was a columnist who just died, and I didn't know his story at all. His name was Jonathan Chark, and he's written for this website for years. He was a man in his thirties and he wrote extensively about how

he battled cancer. He died just a few weeks ago, and they reposted one of the articles he wrote about six months ago.

And here's part of what he said. And as he wrote this article, he wrote about how his dad died when he was 21 but was diagnosed with Parkinson's when he was 12. Here's what he says. "Everyone was supportive at first." Speaking about his experience with his dad right now. "They brought us food. They drove him places. They got him in and out of the car. But those visits slowly dried up over time. My dad kept getting sicker and could no longer do the things that had made them friends in the first place. People moved or had kids or got busy at work. Even the Christmas cards stopped coming.

By the end, the only people who stopped by our houses were nurses and health care workers. My dad died when I was 21. There were a bunch of people at his funeral whom I hadn't seen in years. They all told me how sorry they were and asked whether there was anything they could do. And all I could do was think, I don't know any of you. I know of you. I've heard your name, but I don't know you.

The lie that society tells us is that our friends can be our family. That's the promise of TV shows like *Friends* and *Seinfeld* and *How I Met Your Mother*. We can all leave our hometowns behind and have an exciting adventure in the big city with people that we meet. And those people will love us and take care of us and be there for us. But life is more like what happened to the actual actors of *Friends*. Their TV reunion was the first time all six had been together in years. They still cared about each other to some degree, but they had grown apart. They were living in different cities, working different jobs, and had a million different things happen to them and they didn't share them as a group. It couldn't be the same as it was when they were single and working on the same TV set.

Americans tend to put our careers first and move around the country. That's what my parents did. My dad was from Nebraska. My mom was from the Philippines. I grew up in Dallas. That's a long way from their families. My parents tried to form a community where they lived, but they didn't really have one, at least not one that lasted.

I was nervous the first time I went to a life group. I joined a church and a guy a few years older than me invited me to a group. It was a smaller group of people who met at his house every week. I remember walking up to the door, not knowing what to expect on the other side. There were about a dozen people in a living room talking to each other. I didn't know any of them except the guy who invited me, and I barely knew him and I didn't know what to do. So, I did what most people do. I headed over to the table with the snacks.

Eventually, the chatter died down and everyone sat in a circle in the living room. They all introduced themselves with an icebreaker, something about their favorite TV show, or their favorite snack. I was thinking either I was supposed to say I'm an alcoholic or this is a cult. But nothing that exciting happened. They sang a few songs and talked about the Bible for a while. At the end of the meeting, everyone paired off to pray with each other, and I was asked afterward what I thought of the group. Then they asked if I would come back. I said I guess so. I wasn't sure. That was seven years ago.

Some of those strangers from that house that first night are now some of my closest friends. It didn't happen overnight. It took me a long time to feel comfortable. I usually came after the life group had started and I left as soon as it was over. But I was seeing the same people every week and I was telling them about my problems and they were telling me about theirs. Do that for long enough and you become friends. You get to know enough people that way, and life group goes from being an obligation to something you look forward to.

Making the commitment to come every week is still hard. There are always other things to do. Sometimes you're tired or you had a long day, or you just don't feel like it. And then it gets harder once you get married and have kids. Nor are the people always easy to deal with. You may not have a lot in common. You have to search for things to talk about. You can be vulnerable with people and they don't always respond how you would expect. And you certainly won't always agree with them on how they see the world. But I can't imagine not being in a life group at this point.

Human beings aren't supposed to go through life as faces in a crowd. It's like that song from Cheers, "Sometimes You Want to Go Where Everyone Knows Your Name." Life Group is a different kind of insurance. People talk about medical insurance and life insurance when you get sick, but relational insurance is far more important. I didn't need my dad's money, but I sure could have used some of his friends.

I wish I could say that getting diagnosed with cancer has brought me closer to God. That my faith is stronger than ever before. That it has comforted me through these tough times. I've read plenty of stories like that, but that's not really how it's worked for me. I want to believe in a miracle. There have been people with stage four sarcomas whose tumors never came back. No one knows why. Some things are still beyond the knowledge of medical science. I asked my doctor if I could be one of those people. He replied, I'm not the one who decides those things.

I believe in a God who does. But I also know that he's chosen not to heal me. At least not yet, and that hurts. There's a Bible passage from Jesus' brother that comes to

mind. This is James 4, verses 13 and following. "Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." So, where does that verse leave us, as just simply little mists?

There are some other things that I've been learning over the past year in the Bible. James 1:27 says, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress..." Or Isaiah 1, verse 17, "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow."

There are hundreds of verses like that. I've already told some of my friends when I see you in heaven, there's only one thing I'm going to ask. Were you good to my son? Were you good to my wife? Were you there for them? Does my son know you? I don't want Jackson (his son) to have the same childhood that I did. I want him to wonder why his dad's friends came over and shot hoops with him, why they always invite him to their houses, and why they were at so many of his games. I hope he gets sick of them."

Now, that's his encounter, and certainly, not every group ends up with that kind of close-knit expectation. But I love how he writes about learning that he needed and wanted and longed for community. Because what he was realizing was that he needed the church.

You may be here this weekend saying I don't really need church. I can do this on my own. But your spiritual life was never intended to be a solo journey, and a group might be a great place, or maybe the larger gathering. But what all of us need is to be in a place where we are able to say, I will be engaged in the life of the church.

And here at Orchard Hill. We've defined that in three ways. We've talked about showing up, just simply saying that part of the spiritual discipline that we all need is just the commitment to say, I show up, meaning, if I'm not sick, I'm not out of town, to the best of my ability, I show up. And then I grow up. I get into a study, a group, where I have a chance to have people who know me and to speak into my life. And then I step up by using my time, my gifts, my talents, my resources to be part of the church.

And there are tangible and intangible ways that all happens. Sometimes the intangible is to say, I'm going to love and invest in a person that's not part of a program at all. I'm going to bring my best self to something. I'm going to be

vulnerable when I show up in a group. And sometimes it's the tangible that puts us in a place. And when we do that, then I believe because this is God's "A" plan, what we'll see is God using the people of this church to show the community around us what it is to be people who live in rich community.

People may not agree with what we think the Bible says. They may not like some of the things that we practice, but what we want people to see in the broader community is people who love each other and do life together and them to say, I want to be part of what that looks like. Even if I don't agree with all that goes on in how you live or what you believe.

In the Bible, one of the ways that the church is spoken about, is as the bride of Christ, that the church is the bride of Christ. And here's something that's true about me. If you get to know me and you say, I kind of like Kurt, I'd like to hang out with Kurt, you know, Kurt's alright, but if you turn around and say, I'd like to invite you to dinner, but your wife annoys me. She irritates me. I don't like her. So, we'd like you to come to dinner, but not your wife.

Here's what's true. You don't get me without my wife. Because to say I want you, but not the bride, is to be offensive to the spouse. To say I want God, but not the church, to say I want Jesus, but not your bride is to say in some ways that what I really want is I want you and all the good, but I don't want anything that is inconvenient or irritating to me.

But as you say, the church needs me and I need the church, what will happen is you'll see your own spiritual life have a stronger sense of purpose and calling and passion, and you'll see God work in and through it. And that's our hope for where we're headed this fall as a church and where God will be working in our midst.

Father, today I ask that you would remind us that whatever our perception is of the church, you've created it for us and for the world, and that knowing that the church needs us and we need the church, can create in us something that will actually draw us much closer to you and will bring about your goodness in the broader world. And so, Father, we ask that today you would help each one of us to celebrate and savor what Jesus has done on our behalf and to know that you've called us to do this in a broader community. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks for being here. Have a great day.