The Doctrine of the Church

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us.!

And so through his word and through his spirit and through the church, he has richly provided us with everything we need to live the Christian life, to be faithful here on earth.
And so with the word, with the spirit, and with our brothers and sisters in the church, we have a fruitful paradise to come to for rest and worship. Yes, we are at war, both individually and collectively.
Yes, we struggle against sin. Yes, we fight against false teaching, but we have everything we need for those battles. And when it comes to speaking about the church, there are two senses in which you can talk about the church.
You can speak of the church universally or the universal church. This is all Christians everywhere throughout the world. Or you can speak about the church locally. So First Baptist Mustang would be an example of a local church.
[1:29] And so there is only one church of God, but there are very many local churches who gather together throughout the regions of the world.

And so you can think about each of those churches as a local manifestation or a local expression of the universal church. And so this is similar to states belonging to a nation.
You can be an American who lives in Oklahoma or you can be an American who lives in New York. The citizenship is the same. The expression of what life looks like in those two states will be different because the situations are different.
And so in a similar way, there is one church of God and one citizenship in that kingdom. But there are very many local churches that gather throughout the places that the Lord has redeemed his people.
And tonight we'll talk about both of those. We'll primarily kind of be thinking about the local church as it exists locally. So our church being an example of that. As I mentioned, we'll be asking and answering several questions.
[2:31] Five to be exact. Why should we study the church? What is the church? Why does the church exist? Why should you be a part of the church? And what happens if you neglect the church?

And you can open with me to 1 Peter chapter 2. And it'll be just a moment before we get there, but we'll be reading 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 4 through 10.
But our first question tonight is why study the church? Wouldn't our time be better spent just thinking about theology or just thinking about Christ or thinking about salvation or just going to a specific passage of Scripture and studying there?
Well, there are a few reasons why we should study the church. And the first one is that we need to study the church so that we can know what God expects of her. We need to study the church so that we can know what God expects of her.
And we study about the church through studying the Scriptures. And the New Testament is interesting when you think about it from this angle because all of its letters are written to local churches.
[3:54] All of these letters are written to local churches. And as you read these letters, they're written to specific local churches. The church at Ephesus or the churches of Asia Minor, the church in Corinth.

But the truth of what is said to those specific churches applies to all churches everywhere and to any church anywhere. And so as we read a letter like 1 Peter, 1 Peter is not written to us directly,

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but it is written for us as members of the church.
And so when we know what God expects of his church, we can then know what a healthy church looks like. And that's important because most of us won't be here forever.
Many jobs will take you other places or you'll have to find a different church for one reason or another. And being able to identify a healthy church is critically important. And in order to do that, you need to know what God expects and demands of his church.
We can also know how we can become a more healthy local church. If we know what God's standard is and we see that we're falling short of that standard in some way, we can act to make our church a healthier place to be.
[5:10] And then we can also know how to remain faithful if we know what the Lord expects from us. It'll keep us safe from error. And a second reason we should study the church is because the church is where all of theology takes place.

It's where all of theology takes place. It's really the center for the Christian life. And there's a pastor from church history by the name of Cyprian.
And he said this, Now a couple of things that Cyprian is not saying.
He's not saying that the church is as authoritative as Christ is. He's not saying that. Cyprian is also not saying that belonging to a church is a work we need to perform in order to be forgiven.
What he's saying is that the normal pattern and expectation of the Christian life is that it would be vitally connected to the local church. And why would he call the church a mother?
[6:30] Well, because mothers give and sustain life, which is what the church does for us spiritually. And thinking of the church as mother may seem weird to you, and I get it, but if you went to high school or college, you may refer to that school as what?

Your alma mater. That Latin phrase means nurturing mother. That's where you grew up. That's what formed you. That's what contributed to who you are as a person.
And so even that idea isn't as foreign to us today as we might initially think. And so what he's saying is that whoever has God as their father will demonstrate their childhood by being vitally connected to a local church.
And this is what the apostles believed as well. When Paul wanted to write a letter to Christians in a certain area, what did he do? He sent it to the church.
That's where Christians will be. That's where Christians will hear these words read. And so everything we have in these New Testament letters is a result of God speaking to the church.
[7:42] And our theology comes out of those letters. And so we can say that theology originates in and belongs to the church.

And so the church is sort of the dinner table around which every theological conversation takes place. And so as we study the church and as our understanding of it grows, we're building the table that hosts those theological conversations in our own mind.
Theology should not be separated from the church. We study theology in order to serve the church. And so we need to know what God expects of the church.
Because if the church is unhealthy, the world doesn't have hope. Paul calls the church in 1 Timothy 3 the pillar and buttress of the truth.
The church is the foundation of the proclamation of the truth in our world. And if the church at large is unhealthy, the gospel message that goes out of the church is diluted or polluted.
[8:55] And so we need to study the church because it is through the church that God sends his word to the world. So our second question is, what is the church?

What is the church? And if you're in 1 Peter 2, pick up with me at verse 4. Peter says, As you come to him, that is to Christ, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
For it stands in Scripture, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.
So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.
They stumble because they disobey the word as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race. A royal priesthood.

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[10:11] A holy nation. A people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people.

Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. And so when we think about what is the church, I can give you a definition for what is a local church.
A church is a local community of God's people who have covenanted together to obey Jesus.
A church is a local community of God's people who have covenanted together to obey Jesus.
So you and a Christian friend both belong to the universal church, but you may not be a part of the same local church.
[11:22] You may go to different churches. You've both been saved by God. You both have equal standing before God, but you haven't made that promise to each other. You haven't covenanted together and you don't regularly gather together with the bulk of God's people.

And I want to zero in on how Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, describes the church. He says, but you.
And this is specifically in contrast to the unbelievers that he has just described in verses 7 and 8.
And the end of verse 8 describes them. They stumble because they disobey the word.
And as you read through 1 Peter, he's describing believers and unbelievers. And he has a couple of shorthand ways of referring to both of them. One of the ways that he refers to believers is obedience.
Believers are people who obey. Unbelievers are those who disobey. And so he's referring by calling them those who disobey, he's referring to unbelievers, those who have not trusted in God's word.
[12:34] But you, on the other hand, those who obey, those who have faith, your chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.

And you may have a lot of little footnotes in your Bible there in verse 9. That's because each one of these descriptions appears all throughout the Old Testament to describe Israel.
Each one of these descriptions is used at different times to describe God's old covenant people, the nation of Israel. And now Peter is using those same terms and applying them to these Gentile churches.
These are churches in Asia Minor that would have primarily been composed of Gentiles. Why is that significant? What Peter is doing is he is showing us the church is the vehicle through which all of God's promises to Israel go to the nations.
And we as Gentile believers are kind of the first fruits of that happening. The church is the vehicle through which God's promises for Israel go to the nations.
[13:42] Now this doesn't mean that Israel is permanently cut off and done away with but it does mean that we as the church have been grafted into, brought into the promises that God has previously made to his people.

All of the promises that we have as Christians have their origin and foundations in promises that God already made to Israel.
when you think of what makes Christianity distinctly Christian you think of promises like about the Messiah.
You think of the new covenant. You think of the new birth. You think of the new creation both in our hearts and the new creation we will live in someday. All of those promises are found in the Old Testament.
They're reiterated and expanded upon in the New but their origin and foundation is found on the pages of the Old Testament. And so we need to read and love the Old Testament. There are parts of it that we're like I don't know if this genealogy is relevant to me or not but we need to love it because that is our ancestry.
[14:48] These are our promises that we've been grafted into. So why does God create this new group? Why does he create this church that he now borrows terms that were originally applied to Israel and applies them now to the church?

Look with me at verse 9. That. So here's a purpose statement. For the purpose that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
The church exists to proclaim. The church exists to proclaim Christ. And we proclaim him in various ways.

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We proclaim him in worship in preaching in sharing the word with each other to encourage one another. We proclaim him in the Lord's Supper. Paul says we proclaim his death until he comes. We proclaim him by sharing the word with unbelievers in evangelism.
And so the question for us is do we proclaim him? As a church collectively and you as an individual do you proclaim him with regularity? And I love our students.
[15:56] one from the recent past really stands out. She for her birthday one year told her parents hey instead of getting me presents this year I just want gospel tracks.

And I'm not saying that every student has to do that in order to be faithful but the heart there is proclamation. She as an individual recognizes her purpose is to make Christ known.
And Peter is saying that we've received all these blessings as the church in order to proclaim Christ.
And then even these phrases in verse 10 originally appear in the Old Testament primarily in the book of Hosea.
So he says in verse 10 once you were not a people but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.
mercy. And if you remember the story of Hosea the Lord called him to take as a wife an unfaithful woman. A woman who would cheat on him and it seems from the narrative that some of the kids she has aren't even Hosea's because of her unfaithfulness.
[17:08] And the Lord calls Hosea to do this as a sign of Israel's unfaithfulness to him. He covenantally married Israel but they had been faithless to him.

And so as Gomer his wife is having these illegitimate children they receive names that the Lord instructs Hosea to give them. One of the names is not my people as a sign that Israel has rebelled against the Lord.
Another of their names is no mercy. They shall not receive mercy. And Peter now applies these names to us.
And throughout the story of Hosea God tells Hosea hey no mercy now call her mercy. Not my people call him my people.
There's a change in identity because God is faithful to his promises and so Peter is applying that to us. We as Gentiles were far off. We used to not be a people but now we are God's people.
[18:17] We used to have not received mercy and now we have received mercy. As Paul says in Ephesians 2 we once were far off but we've been brought near through the blood of Christ.

And so at one point in all of our lives before we were saved and if you're not saved this is you now we did not know what mercy was but now we've received it from God. Once we didn't know what love was but now we've been loved eternally by his son.
And if you look at verse 5 with me again you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house.
And so as we grow individually as Christians we are growing together. The Christian life is not meant to be lived in isolation. We're not just united to Christ individually but also congregationally. As we covenant with each other we are growing together. We are being built together as a local temple as it were for God's presence. And the Spirit is at work among us as we gather to do just this.
[19:30] To grow us and to bring us together. And in Ephesians 4 Paul compares the church to a human body. and he goes through elsewhere in some of his letters he goes through how the body is meant to work together.

And if each part decides it wants a different role the body doesn't function well. And the same is true within the church. And so your goal as a Christian is not to cross the finish line first.
Your goal is to help build each other up. My goal is not necessarily to get as far as I can as an individual but to help others along the journey. And so we are being built together this is what the Lord is doing in us as we gather.
And so the church is the place where God's love is fully displayed toward us and among us as we love each other in this way we're making a declaration to the world about who we are and what our God is like.
This is what Jesus himself said in John 13 by this the whole world will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. Now thirdly why does the church exist?
[20:50] So we've answered what is the church now why does the church exist in the first place? So why do these promises come to the church? Why does the church exist here on earth at all?

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We could give many reasons but as we've pointed out Peter highlights one proclamation. That is why the church exists here on earth. The Lord has saved us so that he can send us.
He's given us this collective identity so that we can proclaim him and we proclaim him to the ends of the earth. We make disciples of all nations until the Lord returns.
But why is the church here? Hypothetically God could have saved us and immediately brought us to heaven which would be incredible. That would be great.
Or he could have saved us as individuals and just left us as individuals scattered throughout the world. But he didn't do those things because one if he had just saved us and brought us immediately to heaven there would never be anyone here to proclaim the truth of what happened to us.
[21:56] There would be no one here to explain the gospel to sinners. And secondly if we were saved and just left on our own if the Lord kept us as individuals just scattered throughout the world all of us would be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

All of us need eyes on our lives to help us stay on the path. And sin is too deep within us. Our difficulties and trials are too heavy for us to carry on our own.
And so the church by being brought together is custom built to sanctify us to grow us and also to endure hardship together.
And so it's in God's wisdom and loving kindness that he has brought us into the church. And when you think of the church proclaiming him, two passages stand out.
Matthew 28 and Acts 1. Matthew 28 Jesus gives his disciples the great commission. go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
[23:10] And then in Acts 1.8 he says you'll be my witnesses and you'll go scatter throughout the earth proclaiming my truth. And when we think about the great commission it tells us to make disciples but notice it doesn't say to make converts but to make disciples.

And some churches focus exclusively on making converts and so they're very evangelistic but there's no depth in those churches. The Lord Jesus Christ calls us to make disciples by teaching and instructing his people what we are to do.
And then how far does this proclamation go? Where do we go on mission? This proclamation goes to the ends of the earth and it goes to all nations.
nations. Why do we preach the gospel everywhere? Why do we preach the gospel to the ends of the earth? Because we're called to proclaim the name of Christ in every place where he reigns and he rules it all.
And so Malachi 1.11 the Lord says from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations. And Jesus himself is king over every person and people group.
[24:23] He is sovereign over every tribe and tongue. He's the unconquerable ruler over every nation and continent. And so we proclaim him to the ends of the earth because he reigns there.

And he has sent us there. And as we think about our mission as the church we are sent out by the son.
The son was sent out by the father. And so the father sends the son and the son sends the church.
And so as we go we are participating in something that's at the very heart of who God is.
Our God is extroverted and overflowing in love and grace toward those who have not heard. This is why Christ came. This is why he died to save souls to the ends of the earth.
And this is why you're here as a Christian in our church. Not everyone here will go. That's not God's intention. But we are here to proclaim him throughout Mustang and Yukon and Oklahoma City.
[25:25] And we will send people to the ends of the earth. Because that's what Christ has called us to do. And because of that no cost is too high for him.

And I love reading biographies about pastors and theologians from the past but also missionaries and just all that they were willing to sacrifice for the cause of Christ. Christ. And one of my favorite stories is a group of young men who had decided that they were going to sell everything they owned and literally enslave themselves on this island so that they can preach the gospel to these unreached people.
There's a far off island they were going to to sell themselves into slavery so they'd have a chance to preach the name of Christ to these people. And as they sell everything they're on a boat together leaving the harbor their parents are crying their family members are crying begging them to stay

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asking them to stay asking them to reconsider warning them of all the danger that lies ahead and the response of one of these men was shouldn't the lamb receive the full reward for his suffering their focus was on Christ he died so that we would go to the ends of the earth so that people in every corner of the world would hear the name of Christ and they were willing to give up everything for that.
And so why does the church exist? The church exists for proclamation. Question four why be a part of the church? Why be a part of the church?
Lots of reasons we could consider we'll look at seven quickly. Number one Christ is worthy. Christ is worthy of our obedience.
[27:14] And we could stop right there. He's commanded us. He is worthy of our allegiance. End of the story. But secondly God commands you to do it. God commands you to be a part of the church.

This is what he has saved you for. And so you should be vitally connected because God commands you to do it. Number three it's at the center of what God is doing on earth.
earth. It's at the center of what God is doing on earth. It's ground zero for the advancement of God's kingdom throughout the world.
Number four it's where true knowledge is gained. It's where true knowledge is gained. And there are a lot of different facets to that knowledge.
Knowledge of God. He reveals himself through his word to his church. Knowledge of ourselves and our sin. Knowledge of others in the world and where this world is going.
[28:16] And that knowledge of self is really important. Like I said earlier we need eyes on our lives to help us stay on the path. We need people to speak into our lives if we step out of line.

And I've never watched a season of American Idol praise God. But I've seen clips of people who clearly needed someone to tell them they can't sing.
And now the first time they're hearing it is on national TV and they clearly cannot sing. Sometimes we need people to tell us, hey, you're not that great at this. Maybe find something else to do.
And that knowledge of self is a gift given to us by the church, by a church that's invested in each other as individuals. number five, community.
Community. It takes a village to raise a child and it takes a church to grow a Christian. And it's tough to claim citizenship of a kingdom if you don't live with and spend time with other citizens.
[29:30] What does your citizenship mean if you don't have any meaningful life among other citizens? Number six, ministry.

Ministry. It's where all of the spiritual gifts are put on full display as we serve each other. Why do you have spiritual gifts as a Christian? To build up the body of Christ.
To serve the body of Christ. To edify other Christians. And so the church is the stage on which the spiritual gifts are put on display. And then number seven, lastly, the church will never be defeated.
The church will never be defeated. Jesus Christ promised in Matthew 16, I will build my church. and the gates of hell will prevail against it. As the church continues to exist, it has Christ promised that nothing will defeat it.
[30:38] If the church at large stays faithful, nothing will conquer it. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the word of our Lord will not, and the church, which is built on that word, will never fall.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but the church will not. Our enemies will pass away, but the church will not. Our sin one day will fully and finally be done away with, but the church will not be. Our sorrows will come to an end, but the church never will. Our imperfections will be completely erased, but the church never will be. And how can we know this?
Because Jesus is alive, and he reigns forevermore, and he has promised us that the strength of hell will never be able to conquer his church.
He is alive, he is reigning, and so his church is safe, his kingdom is secure, and he will keep his promises. And so regardless of how difficult our life is as a church, whatever battles we face from persecution from the outside, or sin rising up from the inside, that's not the end of the story.
[32:00] The church will not be defeated because Christ is her head. The church is going somewhere, the church is going to Christ, the church is journeying toward paradise with the Lord.

Are you going with her? Are you ready to meet the Lord? This is why you should be a part of the church. But fifthly, final question, what happens if you neglect the church?

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What happens if you neglect the church? Unfortunately, the church is often neglected even by those who love Christ. And when I say the church is neglected, that doesn't just mean non-attendance.
That doesn't just mean kind of disappearing. The church can be neglected even by someone who's here every week. You can neglect the church from your seat right now simply by not valuing the church or cherishing or appreciating the church.
And some of the more obvious signs of neglect are all around us. Some of these charges are made by people who claim to be Christians. In fact, all of them are made by people who claim to be Christians.
[33:09] Things like, I love Jesus, I don't love his church. I just read my Bible on my own. Religion is personal. It's more about a relationship rather than religion.

Or the church is full of hypocrites. Or the people are weird. And sometimes we say amen. Not you guys. People say I've been hurt by the church.
And so because I've been hurt, I'm not going to make more investments there because I've been hurt before and I don't want to get further hurt. And certainly some people come from very bad situations in churches but these things are all said by people who claim to be Christians.
And maybe you've been frustrated by the church or by particular people within the church and thought I'm just going to distance myself. I'm just going to step back. I'm still going to be there but I'm not going to invest emotionally in these relationships because it's just too heartbreaking when it goes south.
And certainly we face temptations to do that often but it's really kind of childish. one time when I was in elementary school I woke up and was just having an off day like I wasn't rebelling I was just I couldn't do anything right and so I kept like getting in trouble and I just resolved when I was on the school bus I was like I'm just going to go home and go straight to my room so I don't get in trouble anymore.
[34:32] That's not a valid way to live life. But that's what many Christians will do. They get hurt and they feel like I'm just not going to invest myself because this hurts so bad.

I'm just going to withdraw. That's not what the Lord has called us to do. C.S. Lewis wrote in The Four Loves, his book called The Four Loves.
Some people don't like C.S. Lewis which makes me like him more because I'm kind of a punk but he said this, to love at all is to be vulnerable.
love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping your heart intact, you must give it to no one, not even an animal.
Wrap it carefully around with hobbies and little luxuries, avoid all entanglements, lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness.
[35:37] but in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change.

Your heart will not be broken, it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.
we are taking a risk when we invest in people. We are exposing ourselves to hurt. That's what love does when sin is involved.
And so there's a temptation to just withdraw and there's a lie from Satan that makes that somewhat attractive. And so if you're not connected to the church, you likely will have less pain in your life, but you won't have anyone to share yours.
There will be less sacrifices that you're asked to make, but there will be no one to serve you when you're in need. You'll have less stress, but no one to share in your joy.
[36:51] You'll have less work to do, but no one to enjoy the fruit with. You'll have less sorrow in your life, but you won't have as many people to laugh with.

you'll have less of a burden to carry, but no one to help you carry yours. You'll have less of a slowdown. People won't inconvenience you as much if you withdraw, but you won't have anyone to cross the finish line with.
And so in other words, without the church, your life will probably be easier, but it won't be more satisfying, and it won't bring more glory to God. You'll be all alone with your own resources in this big and sometimes hostile world.
What we see in the Bible is paradoxical, but what we see is that our life is enjoyed most when it's poured out in service to others, even when that service is painful and inconvenient and doesn't get

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repaid or noticed.
But one day, every bitter thing will be forgotten. One day, every challenge we've faced will be in the rearview mirror, and we won't look at any sacrifice we've made and think that wasn't worth it.
[38:08] We won't look back at any time we've served someone and think I wish I hadn't used my time that way. We will see God's glory in the face of Christ and say it was worth it.

If you detach from the church, if you neglect the church, you'll be disobedient to Christ and so you won't look like him. And the opposite of being detached from the church isn't just attending, it's being meaningfully connected with your church, which means being meaningfully connected to the people who make up your church.
And so have you failed to love the church the way that you should? I think we all have. Have you slacked off in your involvement in the church? Have you spoken of the an unfaithful or slanderous way?
Have you viewed church as a chore rather than one of Christ's choicest gifts to us? There's forgiveness in Christ. The gospel is for the church, not just for those who don't know it, it's for us every single day.
And so why should you study the church? Why should you love the church? Why should you invest in the church? Because Jesus loves her and gave himself for her. And we as Jesus' people love what Christ loves.
[39:32] And that's what it means to be a Christian, to love what God loves, and he loves his people. And so in God's wisdom, the church is God's plan for filling the earth with his glory as the waters cover the sea, and we want to be part of that.

So do you love Christ? Do you love the Father? Prove it and love the church. Love what God loves. Love the people for whom Christ died and serve them.
But as we love the church, the church is not an end in itself. Loving the church is loving God's gift, which gives glory to him.
We just gave our kids presents at Christmas, Christmas. And I don't want my kids to open a present and set it aside and say, I'm not going to play with that because I love you more than this gift. That's not the purpose of the gift. God has given us the church. We can love the church as a way of loving the God of the church.
[40:45] We should not neglect God's commands to be connected to the church. Obey him and you will not be alone. You will not be lost. You will not be led astray.

You'll be walking on the path that the church has walked for thousands of years and Christ himself will lead us home and comfort us until the journey is done. And then we will see him and we will thank him.
We will thank him all together. No more local churches, no more local assemblies, no more churches scattered throughout the world. And being persecuted, just one assembly for all eternity.
I want you to turn finally to Revelation chapter 7. We'll conclude with this. I want to read for us to finish our time together.
Revelation 7 verses 9 through 12. And as we read this, I want you to do your best to picture this. This passage is full of pictures for us.
[42:02] So I want you to envision this in your mind's eye as best you can as we read. after this, I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, Amen. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen. This is the future of First Baptist Mustang.
This is the future of the church. Let's pray. Our Father, we thank you for the gift of the church.
I pray that we would not neglect it but would understand what your purpose is in having your church here on earth. I pray that we as a church collectively would faithfully participate in your plan to carry your glory and your gospel to the ends of the earth and Lord please keep us faithful until we see your son face to face.

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[43:38] I pray that we would behold him now in your word and be faithful to him every step of the way until one day we see him and we're just like him because we will see him in all of his glory.

Father, keep our church safe from sin that arises within it. help us be pure and faithful and then keep us strong in the face of opposition that comes from the outside, whether it be from false teachers or from persecution.
Keep us faithful, keep us pure until the end. Keep us confident in your promise that as your son said, the church will not be defeated.
And it's the name of Christ, the risen Lord of the church that we pray. Amen. Amen.

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