An Emphatic Beginning

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Preacher: Jerry Cherian

[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. Good evening, church family.

It's my distinct honor, joy, and privilege to be here to serve you guys this evening by preaching God's Word. I've been looking forward to this time.
I've been praying for our time together, and I hope that our time tonight in the Word is profitable. I'm thankful to Pastor Michael for this opportunity, and for more than that, just his investment in my life, and for the mentorships he provides me, for his guidance.
He's constantly in touch with me, even while I'm back in L.A., so I'm really thankful for his life and for his influence, and he's also my best wingman. He tries a lot for me, if you know that.
I'm just not good enough. But truly thankful for him, and at the same time, I'm also thankful for all of you. A lot of you, while I'm back in L.A., text me. You remind me that you're praying for me.
[1:06] You write me letters. I get boxes of goodies that I love. So you're really kind people. I'm so thankful for your love and for your encouragement and for your prayers for me.

I constantly am thankful for the Lord just for your ministry to me. And also, I want to let you guys know that like New York has Empire State, and like Chicago has the Bean, Mustang has First Baptist.
And I really mean this. Funny story. I work at the TMS Library. I work at the Seminary Library. Last week, right before I came on Wednesday, I was hauling mail upstairs, and I dropped a package. And the sweet lady who works at the reception told me, you never told me you're from Mustang. And I was like, wait, do you know Mustang? She was like, who doesn't know Mustang? It's one of the sweetest churches.
They actually once had a team out from TMS out in Mustang, and they were blown away by your love and generosity and your hospitality. And so I really want to commend you for that.
[2:12] And you are a church who's looked up to, and you're really commended. And I get a lot of respect because of you guys. So thank you for doing that. For our time in the Word this evening, I want to turn your attention to the Gospel of John in Chapter 2.

And we'll be reading from verses 13 through 25. The Gospel according to John, Chapter 2, verses 13 through 25.
And I've titled my sermon, An Emphatic Beginning. I'm going to read the text for us, and then we're going to see what the Lord has to teach us through this text.
John's Gospel, Chapter 2, verses 13 through 25. This is what God's Word says. The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves and the money changers seated at their tables. And He made a scourge of cords and drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen.
[3:22] And He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. And to those who were selling doves, He said, Take these things away. Stop making my Father's house a place of business.

His disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for your house will consume me. Then the Jews said to Him, What sign do you show us as your authority for doing these things? Jesus answered them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.
The Jews then said, It took 46 years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days? But He was speaking of the temple of His body. So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this, And they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

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Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men.
And because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man. It is true to an extent that it does not matter how you begin.
[4:44] And all that matters is how you end. But it's also true that a strong beginning does send out a strong statement about you, about your motive, and about your intent.

Winston Churchill, who was one of the greatest prime ministers of England, and he became the prime minister of England in 1940, and was right during the thick of World War II, when the Nazi Germany was concurring the lower countries, like France, Belgium, Luxembourg.
And while the Nazi Germany was out on the hunt, at that decisive time, Winston Churchill becomes the prime minister of England in May of 1940.
And as soon as he became the prime minister, he made some bold decisions of forming alliances. He made some key tactical changes within his country and within the government structure and within the parliament.
He made some unconventional decisions. He gave a lot of motivational speeches, both to the army and to the people, to cheer them on in this World War II battle.
[6:00] And during those times, as he was just beginning his reign or his term as the prime minister, a lot of people looked up to him and thought he was being hard.

But at the same time, if you read history, you know he was a man on a mission right from the outset. And to a part, because of his efforts in 1940, the Nazi Germany, which was ruthless in concurring a lot of the parts of the Europe, was finally defeated by the Western Front in 1945.
An emphatic beginning does set the precedent for one's future work. Though it does not guarantee that you'll have a favorable outcome, it does speak about your intention and about your motive and about your preparation.
We see a similar tone here in John chapter 2. When you come to John chapter 2, verses 1 down, these are some of the very first few weeks of ministry of Jesus.
Jesus was born here on this earth. He was baptized by John the Baptist. He was out in the wilderness being tempted by Satan in Matthew chapter 4.
[7:24] And it's believed it's right after that that you read the narrative from John chapter 2 all the way to John chapter 4. This is a unique narrative mentioned by no other gospel writer.

And what you see in John chapter 2, verses 13 to 25, is one of this first acts he does in the public ministry.
John chapter 2, verses 1 through 12, or 1 through 11, the wedding at Cana was more of a private event. It was Jesus' friends and family who was around at that event.
But you come to John chapter 2, verses 13, this is the first public ministry that Jesus is engaged in. And right at the outset, he sets forth his authority and power, which serves as a proof of his deity, which serves as a proof that he is God.
He makes it absolutely clear right from the outset. And so in this text, as we move along, we're going to see Jesus' expression of authority and power in three different scenes, how he expresses his deity.
[8:45] And I hope it's going to serve us by reminding us of Jesus' life here on this earth was no mere ordinary life, but he was God.

The first thing we see in verses 13 through 17, we're going to call it an audacious action. An audacious action, verse 13 through 17. It was a bold, zealous, confident action that Jesus engages in that we see in verses 13 through 17.
Verse 13 tells us the Passover of the Jews was near and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. If you read slightly above it, we know that Jesus was in Capernaum and he traveled from there to Jerusalem. Capernaum was up in the north. Jerusalem is down in the south. It's about 85 miles apart. But the reason why the biblical text tells us that he went up to Jerusalem is because Jerusalem was on a higher elevation.
It was the capital of the kingdom. And so Jesus goes up to Jerusalem. He was in Jerusalem during the Passover.
[9:56] It was in Jerusalem that the temple was there. That is where Jews would come for the Passover. And the Passover was one of the most significant Jewish festivals.

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It marked, it reminded them in history how God had delivered them. Reading in Exodus chapter 12, how God had delivered them from bondage in Egypt and redeemed them from the rule of Pharaoh and spared their firstborn and killed all the Egyptian firstborn under his wrath.
It is during the Passover that Jesus goes up to Jerusalem. This is a very important detail. Jesus starts his ministry right in the epicenter of Jewish faith and religion.
This is where the Jewish religion kind of operated out of. And historians tell us that during the Passover around Jerusalem, there'd be as many as 400,000 people who would come from all over the Jewish diaspora to worship the Lord.
Jesus is in this strategic place for a specific reason. He starts right among His people.
[11:23] He starts right among them, but what we know from the gospel narrative is all through the life, all through His life and all through His ministry, His own people reject Him.

A faithful pastor said, what shadowed in the great Passover deliverance of old was brought to His consummation in the sacrifice of Jesus.
Jesus was the fulfillment of the Passover and He was right here among them and you would expect that these people would revere Him. but as the ensuing narrative tells us, that is not the case.
Verse 13, Jesus in Jerusalem and what does He find in the temple courts? Verse 14, He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves and the money changers seated at their tables.
One would expect to find in the temple worship. It's Passover, so you'd expect to find sacrifice. One would expect as a pilgrim was traveling to Jerusalem from various parts of the kingdom, he would expect solemnity and peace and a conducive environment to worship Yahweh, God of Israel.
[12:41] But what we find in the text, what Jesus finds in the temple grounds is bleating sheep. He finds bellowing ox he finds the cooing doves and he finds clinking of coins.

He does not find an environment conducive for worship but he sees everything but worship happening there and all sorts of business taking place.
Mind you, this is not right inside the temple. The Jewish, when the author uses the word temple here, a temple is, it's a big piece of property and this most probably the sheep and the oxen and all these things are most probably in the outer court.
It's in the outer court which is known as the court of Gentiles where Gentiles or proselytes who had converted to Judaism could come and worship the Lord. It was most probably at this place that all this business was happening.
And it's also interesting to see in the temple in this outer court oxen and sheep and doves and we might ask the question why oxen and sheep and doves and money changers?
[14:00] It is said that while these pilgrims will travel from all parts of the kingdom it would become sometimes inconvenient for them to carry with them a sacrificial lamb or a dove or something.

And so what had happened was there were traders and businessmen who had set up shops so that they could sell these animals to these pilgrims these worshippers who could use it as a sacrifice.
There were money changers there because every Jew over 20 years of age every male Jew who was over 20 years of age they had to pay temple tax and they would get foreign currency from their country but they had to convert it into the local currency there.
And so it was most probably to facilitate all that that the Jewish system established this system there as a service most probably when they began with. It's speculated it most probably began in the Kidron Valley as you come outside the temple and go across you have the Kidron Valley it most probably started there but the Jewish authorities had now set it up inside the temple and so the first thing a Gentile would see when he comes to worship inside the temple is not the ringing of praise it's not a sacrifice being killed but he would see all sorts of business what's happening on the temple grounds is not service to the Lord but service to the man and it's also fascinating that this happens in the outer court remember I said the outer court is where Gentiles could come and worship and so practically what the Jewish authorities had done was by blocking off the outer court for this business the Gentiles had no way and nowhere to go to come and worship this Yahweh God this is a classic picture of how the Jews had completely taken over the system and that is why we see an outrageous action by Jesus in verse 15 see what he does he made a scourge of cords and drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables what an authoritative action nobody at this point in Jesus' ministry knows who he is he's a mere Jewish man who has come from his hometown to celebrate the Passover but what sort of authority he carries walking into the temple making a

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scourge of cords or a whip of cords and driving all sorts of business from out of the temple this is complete cleansing this is complete purification he's throwing out all the unnecessary stuff that was occupying the temple
[17:16] I can only imagine the chaos that was ensuing there sheep running around and doves flying and the coins on the floor and people running to take it away what chaos Jesus created but amidst that chaos that he created one thing would be noticeable it would be his unapologetic authority and power what authority he carried with him to come inside the temple and clear it of all this a faithful commentator or pastor said it's not so much the physical force of the action but the moral force and authority that he showed which must have astounded the people and so you see an authoritative action and now he puts it into words verse 16 he gives them in plain words why he is doing this and he affirms his deity once again here verse 16 and to those who were selling the doves he said take these things away stop making my father's house a place of business these are his first words in the narrative

Jesus has simply come into the temple grounds made a whip of cords drove things out and as his disciples and probably the Jews are watching it he says nothing and the first things he says is take these things away remove it from here see what he says stop making my father's house a place of business in the original language stop making my father's house it has the mood stop it and stop it right now let this cease and he does not finish there he explains his relation to this temple he calls the temple my father's house this was no mere small statement this was no small joke if you read John chapter 5 verses 17 and 18 another time when he called
God as his father we see the Jews were up against him it says for this reason because Jesus called God as his father the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him because he was not only breaking the Sabbath but also was calling God his own father read the last word there making himself equal with God with Jesus saying this is my father's house he's equated himself as God he has explained his deity and he tells them stop making it stop making my father's house a place of business literally a mall a shopping complex stop making it my father's house is supposed to be a place of worship but what's happening here is bringing dishonor to his father the temple was supposed to be used for worship it was never meant to be for business but they had made it a business it was a whole financial system but I also believe why
Jesus was so aggravated here is because they had occupied the court of Gentiles they had practically pushed the Gentiles away and remember what God had asked the Israelites to be they were supposed to be a light to the nations they were supposed to attract nations and Gentiles to come and worship this living God but by them blocking this temple ground they have told them get away this is ours not only that as I already mentioned he's raising objection because they have made a place of worship a place of business and when you read Matthew chapter 21 verse 13 one thing is also clear there that these were not honest people they had made it a corrupt system it's said that when a faithful worshipper would come bring in an offering there would be an inspector in the temple courtyards he would take a look at your sheep or he would take a look at the offering that they bought I mean he would inspect them for any blemish because a sacrifice is supposed to be unblemished it's not supposed to have any defect in it or stain in it and so these inspector would inspect for any blemish and these poor people sincere worshippers have made a long journey it's impossible to have a lamb with no blemish and so it's believed that they would tell them no you cannot you cannot you cannot offer this lamb as a sacrifice you cannot offer this sheep as a sacrifice but you know what we're here to help you just go down the street my friend is selling oxen there my friend is selling sheep there you can buy it from them and they would charge them exorbitant prices and the money changes would do the same the pilgrims would come with an offering but they had to convert it into local currency and these money changes would charge exorbitant conversion rates from them and that's why Jesus calls in
Matthew 21 verse 13 this his father's house has become a robber's den the Jewish system had become a hindrance they had become a distraction and Jesus was furious because it tainted the glory of his father when it came to the glory of his father and when it came to the glory of God Jesus took bold steps this is an authoritative step this is an audacious step he walks into the temple and right in the face of Jews he overturns their system he was bold he was unafraid because he was right and when his disciples see this verse 17 this is probably a thought that came to their heads afterwards verse 17 his disciples remembered zeal for your house will consume me quoted from Psalm 69 and verse 9 Jesus was consumed with the glory of God and this is not the last time that

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Jesus would have a passion and a zeal for his father you know where the zeal would consummate the zeal would consummate at the cross where he would be so consumed with the purpose of his father that in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus prays in Matthew 22 verse 42 father not my will but your will be done he was consumed with the purpose that God his father had sent him and until he finished that purpose he was on a mission and so right at his outset we see an audacious action and now he gives them a sure sign verses 18 through 22 he gives a sure sign to the people watching especially to the Jews verse 18 he tells them Jews said to him what sign do you show as the authority for doing these things it's again fascinating to note that the
[24:47] Jews who thought they had all the authority they were in complete control no one comes and stops Jesus no one comes and questions him asking why are you doing this stop it they had they thought they had all the authority but no one does that but they ask him a question what sign do you show as your authority it's kind of like we'll let you get up get get out of this but what sign do you have what authority do you have they do not ask him the reason for his action they rather ask him to justify his action and their silence until this point I think it's deafening I think down in their hearts they know their corruption and their sham has been exposed they know that their authority has been thrown into shambles and they realize this person who is exposing them is no mere ordinary man they're sure he's not one of them he's definitely not one from the Jewish system they know that he's not a Gentile a Gentile would it come dare and do this that only leaves one option of who this man can be is this man prophet a mighty prophet from God or even greater is this the promised Messiah

Messiah of the scriptures they are so close to seeing who this person is they are right at the face of the promised Messiah but they still choose to reject him and they question his authority this is also I feel a trick question for Jesus because if Jesus does not show his a sign if he does not give a sign the Jews could put him to death right there and if he does show a sign they could get out of it Jesus does give them a sure sign verse 19 albeit in a cryptic way it's it's it's kind of hidden from them he tells them destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up the Jews asked him for a sign and not only the Jews a lot of people in Jesus's ministry will keep him keep asking him signs and most of the times when you read the gospel or when you study the gospel you see Jesus mostly does not give them any sign but a lot of the times he does refer to this one sign he refers to the sign of his death and his resurrection and though it's not explained here it will be explained in verse 21 22 he tells the
Jews destroy this temple and when you read Jesus Jesus's trial in Matthew 26 verses 60 and 61 when the Sanhedrin is trying to pull up false witnesses against him nobody's able to have the right opinion about him or the right accusation they all tell this man said that I will destroy the temple but look at the text Jesus did not say I will destroy the temple it's destroy this temple the implied subject there on the original the subject there is you go ahead and destroy the temple it's a conditional command why don't you go ahead and destroy this temple the word temple here is the inner sanctuary it's not the same word that was used in verse 15 this word for temple here in the original is naos it basically means the inner sanctuary that is where the glory of the Lord dwell that is the glorious space of the Lord he says you go ahead and destroy it but this is his authority right there I will raise it up look at his authority he is standing in the at the face of his enemies and he gives us unapologetic authority on display this is one unified event this the destruction and the raising of the temple and we we are quick to blame the Jews but I think they took it literally as we would probably they said it took 46 years to build this temple and will you raise it up in three days this temple that you see our present
King Herod took 46 years to do some projects projects on this and make it beautiful and you are telling you could destroy this and you yourself it's emphatic will you yourself raise it up in three days it's not a sincere question this is a question to mock Jesus this is to ridicule him do you have the authority to raise this temple up in three days but this is what is fascinating to me if the Jews believed that this was the Messiah Jesus wouldn't need three days to raise it up if they thought he was talking about the literal temple Jesus could speak a word and he could raise the temple up but they were caught up in disbelief Jesus had exposed their sin right at their face they had Jesus that brought them face to face with their corruption and their ill practices but even when Jesus exposed them they chose to reject it and though I don't want to make any practical applications right now I think it's fascinating for us to even think sometime God through his providential ways in our life exposes sin in our life exposes our hypocrisy in our life but what we do with that at that moment tells

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about a lot about us for a believer that exposure that work of God touching his vein and exposing that sin would burst forth into repentance as David did second Samuel chapter 11 but for an unbeliever he tries to justify it just like the Jews we do not have to call the
Jews out for everything maybe we can look at ourselves here Jesus gives them a sign and this sign verse 21 John tells us he was speaking of the temple of his body he was speaking about the death that he would face and this was a sure sign because who put Jesus to death the Jews did it was the Jews who put Jesus to death right as Jesus predicted and Jesus raised himself up on the third day he gives them a specific sign when the Jews chose to disbelieve it there's a group who believed it verse 22 when he was raised from the dead his disciples remembered that he said this and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken look at the text carefully there it says they believed the scripture and the word it was not specifically or particularly because of the sign that they believed the scripture and got saved it was believed they it is because they believed in the word of God what was spoken in the scripture the scripture probably here is Psalm 69 or one that emphatically points to the fulfillment of the long predicted death burial and resurrection of Jesus but see this belief is brought about by the word by the word that Jesus spoke and I think this brings great implications and applications for us it tells us one thing can be drawn out from here is no amount of signs and proofs can ultimately get a person saved the only way to get saved is through Jesus as revealed in his inherent infallible authoritative word it is only through the word that Jesus taught and preached that we believe and have eternal life signs are helpful they affirm what he said but ultimately it's not the signs that bring salvation bring true belief the word believe here it means to be true and worthy of one's trust the authority of Jesus is now personal to these disciples and so while we see a group that vehemently opposed him and rejected him we see a group who probably did not have the level of understanding of the Jews but had simple faith and trust to believe in the God sent Messiah and for such a people Jesus's authority is not authoritative or hard but sweet that's the case for us too for those who know Jesus for those who love Jesus for those who have accepted him as their Savior for those who for whom Jesus is Lord his authority his authority expressed in the word is sweet but for those who are against Jesus who do not know
[35:07] Jesus as their Savior it sounds cumbersome that is what it was for the Jews and so in the first two scenes Jesus has performed an audacious action a sign of his deity he's given us a sure sign a sign of his deity and this pericope is going to end just like that verse 23 to 25 Jesus gives the third thing he shows an unmistakable understanding an unmistakable understanding verse 23 when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast many believed in his name observing his signs which he was doing the text tells us the Jews could not arrest him the Jews were dumbfounded they could not arrest this man right now but they would be out on the hunt but Jesus was in Jerusalem and the language of the text is such which points that he was continuing to do his signs and miracles he continued to perform wonders among people but the people it's so fascinating the text tells us they observed his sign which he was doing this belief was shallow superficial belief this was not true saving belief they were literally amazed and wowed by Jesus they were fans of Jesus but not followers of

Jesus they were still blind you might call the Jews that they were openly blind but a lot of people who merely were amazed by Jesus because of the signs were still blind but this disbelief does not subtract or take away from Jesus's deity Jesus's authority power and deity does not depend upon the perception of people but in his own nature read verse 24 and 25 but Jesus on his part was not entrusting himself to them for he knew all men and because he did not need anyone to testify concerning man for he himself knew what was in man in our Bible verse 24 you see the word entrust there it's the same word in verse 23 for people who believe John is doing a word in the Bible verse 24 and he did not believe that these people are simply believing because of the signs they did not believe Jesus for who he is no one can fool Jesus your disbelief or your belief does not add or subtract to his deity why the last part of verse 25 because he knows what is in man and is in the
And this phrase here is uniquely used for God. If you read 1 Kings 8 and 39 or Jeremiah 17 and verse 10, it tells only the Lord, Yahweh, knows the intent of the hearts of man.
And so even in people's disbelief, because Jesus knows it, he's not fooled, but he still, because of his unmistakable understanding, affirms his authority, power, and deity.
What an emphatic beginning to his ministry. And this emphatic, authoritative Jesus, just like he started in his ministry, will continue his ministry like this.

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[38:39] He will be emphatic, he'll be authoritative, he'll be unapologetic. He'll proclaim God's glory. This is the first Passover. He has performed a temple cleansing at the first Passover.

And if you studied Mark 11 with us when Pastor Michael taught us, we'd see another Passover at the end. He bookends his ministry here on this earth by cleansing the temple twice.
He came to his own people, but they rejected him. At the end of the first temple cleansing, we do not see the Jews out on the kill. But after the second temple cleansing, Mark 11 verse 18, the Jews will be out on the kill.
But even in that, Jesus began and ends his ministry with his eyes fixed to that coming hour.
And that coming hour was his impending death. That he would die for those who would believe in him. That he would die for those who the Father had given for him.
[39:45] And until he accomplished that purpose, he would go forth with authority and power. And how sweet it is for those who know this Jesus today.

That our worship and adoration for him becomes even more grateful when we realize that our way to the Father was paved by Jesus.
It was because of his ministry here on this earth. It was because of the perfect life that he lived and the death that he died. And because of his resurrection, those who believe in his life, burial, death, and resurrection, they today are not counted as sinners, but are those who have access with the Father.
Their sins are forgiven. You can have perfect reliance and trust on this Jesus. And I hope for those who know this Jesus, this authoritative Jesus, I hope our worship is enhanced.
Even when Paul tells us in Ephesians 2.13, we were a far off, but brought near. Another thing that I think is key here to no doubt as an application is verse 17 and 22.
[41:07] It's a repetition of scriptures. The belief of the disciples was because of the scripture that they heard and believed. And I hope it is a lesson for us too that our belief, if it has come, it has come because of scripture, and it does not end there.

Just like the disciples, I hope that our lives are a continual act of obedience to God's word, that it is modeled by God's word, and it is based on God's word.
Another thing that we see here is the zeal and passion that Jesus had. And although our zeal and passion might not look like this, I hope because of the work that Christ has done in us, our zeal and passion towards the thing that God hates, which is the very sin in our life, is something like this. That we go out on the attack against the sins in our life and are vehemently opposed to it. Just like how Jesus loved the glory of God, that we would want God to be glorified in our lives, that we would go out on the attack against the sin in our lives, that we would hate the things that God hates, and we would love the thing that God loves.
I hope that is an encouragement for us. But at the same time, I also hope for those of us who perhaps do not know this Jesus. Perhaps you have known a lot about Jesus and the season of festivities, you have seen a lot of things about Jesus and a lot of customs about Jesus and signs about Jesus.
[42:35] But if you have still not come to believe on Him as your Savior, as your Lord, as one who has authority over your life, this same Jesus who is today offering salvation at His second coming, He'll have this same zeal.

The one who was and came as a Savior will become the slaughterer of those who are against God's glory. Someone said, every sin that you commit will be judged.
Every sin that you do has to be paid. It's either paid by you under God's wrath or God's wrath is placed upon Jesus for your sin. And so I hope through this text you see that even today, as you see this Jesus authoritatively expressed through His Word, and if you do not know Him yet as your Savior, that you would repent and turn to Him, He came to save sinners just like us, ones who were afar off, Ephesians 2.13, but today are brought nigh.
He is willing to save you today. Repent and run to Him. Let's pray. Father, we are so thankful for Your glory that is expressed to us in Your Word.
Lord, how great Your authority is and how resolute and purposeful You were to attain and fulfill that purpose for which the Father sent You.
[44:08] And so, O Lord, would You help us to live in such a way that we would be thankful for Your work in our life, that we would make it our effort to please You each and every day. And if I pray for those, O Lord, who still do not know You, would You please reveal Yourself as a mighty

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Savior to them who's still ready to receive those who repent and put their trust on Him.
Would You give them that faith? I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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