Doctrine of the Trinity

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Date: 29 May 2024

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[0:00] Well, good morning. It is a joy to be with you. I've been looking forward to this week for you and also looking forward to this time that I would get to be together with you.

I am the pastor at First Baptist and Mustang and so grateful for that privilege. We've got a number of our students who are here that are just absolutely a joy and delight.
And for those from other churches, I know that your pastor would feel the same about you that I feel about our students here. There is nothing in a church as helpful and necessary and vibrant as a student ministry that loves the Lord and loves His Word.
At our church, I've been blessed to serve there for 24 years. In the 24 years I've been there, we've seen the Lord do some great things in a number of ways that the Lord has been kind to us.
But I'm not saying this just because I'm here. I would say this anywhere I was. I don't know that God has poured out His kindness to our church in any way in the 24 years I've been there more clearly and greatly than what is happening in our student ministry today.
[1:23] When I preach on Sunday mornings, I'm looking at the faces of young men and young women who love the Lord and know their Bible.

I'm looking at young people who love our church and I'm looking at people who I love. And I feel an immense weight to be faithful to teach them well from God's Word.
And I feel that same weight today because I know that the students that I'm blessed to serve with are the same kind of students that are represented here in this sanctuary this morning from the different churches.
I do want you teenagers to know that the role you play in your church is critical. It's immense. If I were to wake up tomorrow and be the pastor of a church where the youth ministry was all about games and frills and silliness and triviality, I would just stay in bed.
I'd be too depressed because I have experienced firsthand what it's like to have young people in the church who are hungry to know God's Word.
[2:36] And it is an amazing gift to your church and teenagers. It's an amazing gift to your pastor to be the kind of students who are eager to learn and ready to serve.

Now, I do want to highlight both of those parts for just a brief minute because when you are the kind of students you are, you guys have had to do some things to be here.
You've had to prove yourself faithful to be here. You have to be ready to learn to be here. That's good. But while you're eager to learn, make sure you're always willing to serve.
You don't ever want to become the student or the ministry or the church that thinks they've gotten so intelligent they've outgrown serving. That would be to totally miss the point of what we're doing.
So you've got to always be eager to learn and always be willing to serve. And those two things have to go hand in hand. Again, if you're willing to serve but not eager to learn, you're going to be all gung-ho to go serve a God you don't know.
[3:48] Can't do that. But if you're eager to learn and not willing to serve, then pretty soon that spiritual intellect you've acquired will become a clinging symbol if your knowledge is not cushioned by your service mind.

And so we want to be people as teenagers and as adults, as churches, as youth ministries, as everything we're a part of that are quick to say, I want to know God better.
I don't want to be passionate about a God I don't know. I don't want to sing songs and get all kinds of emotional thrills about a God I don't know.
I don't want to worship a God of my own creation. I don't want to worship a God of my own mind and my own making. I need to know the true God of the Bible. I need to know who God is as He's revealed Himself to us in Scripture.

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You've got to be eager to learn. There are people all over this planet, at camps this summer and at churches this coming Sunday, where people will be very expressive in their worship about a God they don't know.
[5:07] That's not the point. So we must be eager to learn. And as you've already heard taught to you this week, we've got to understand Scripture to understand who our God is.

But your eagerness to learn must be matched with a willingness to serve. Because pride is always lurking right at the door.
And our pride must be squelched. And the best way to squelch your pride is to be a servant. In the small ways, in the routine things, as much as I want you and your student ministry and our churches to be known for what we know, let's also be known for how we serve.
Because when you take someone that's willing to serve, and you put that in the same heart of somebody who is eager to learn, what you have is a worshiper.
The Bible tells us the eyes of the Lord are seeking to and fro for those who will worship Him. If you want to be found pleasing to God, be eager to learn, willing to serve, and a worshiper of Christ.
[6:51] I hope that is an encouragement for all of us who are here today. And will be something that we will all strive to be known for. I do also want to say before we jump into the message this morning, that this is not a small thing for me to get to be here with you.

I don't take it lightly. I don't take this for granted. It is an honor for me. Anytime I get to be with our students at our church, and to get to expand that to you guys with other wonderful churches who are here, this is a real honor and joy for me to be here.
Some of my very favorite people in the world, and I mean that, are in this room. I love our students at our church.
They are so dear to me. I love them more than they know. And it is true that today I am in this room with some of my best friends.
Also, it is true to say that one of my favorite people in the whole planet is also in this room. You have not met her yet.
[8:01] Her name is Rosie May. She is my granddaughter. She will be born in a few months. But she is here. And when I think about what I want my granddaughter and pray my granddaughter will be, and I mean this with all sincerity, I'll pray my granddaughter would have the character of the girls that are in the youth group of my church.

If I knew my granddaughter could be like them, I would be overjoyed the rest of my life.
Now, I'm confident she will, because first of God's goodness. I'm confident she will, because her parents, my son and my daughter-in-law, love the Lord, are incredible examples of Christ's likeness.
But I'm confident that she will, too, because the church you raise your family in is everything. And when you find a group of believers who love the Lord, not just the gifts of the Lord, but love the Lord, it has such a sanctifying effect.
If you were to give me 300 teenagers who are not believers, and I were to offer them the gifts of the Lord, they would all want them. Who wouldn't want peace?
[9:45] Who wouldn't want joy? Who wouldn't want fulfillment? Who wouldn't want to have a sense of purpose? All the things the Lord gives to His people, the gifts of the Lord, are things people would want.

What makes Christians unique unique is that we love the Lord, our God. We don't just want what He has. We love Him.
If we're going to love Him, we must make sure that the God we know, and the God we serve, and the God we love, is the God of the Bible.
Are you with me so far? We must make sure that our relationship with God is accurate based on how God has revealed Himself to us.
So how has God revealed Himself to us? You don't have to turn there yet. Let me just read a couple of scriptures to get in the forefront of our mind.
[10:50] Deuteronomy 6. Most of you memorized John 3.16 early in your life, and if you would have lived in Old Testament times in that land, what you would have memorized as your John 3.16 is Deuteronomy 6.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

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Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one. Let's just start there. We're looking today at the Trinity. How God has revealed Himself to us with one God in three persons.
We just sang it in Holy, Holy, Holy. God in three persons, blessed Trinity. But we start by understanding that our God is one.
Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. There's not many gods. There's not thousands of gods. There is one God.
[12:01] God in our church. I've been preaching through the gospel of Mark. And we just recently were in Mark 12. And so this is fresh in my mind. Mark 12, one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another and seeing that He answered them well, asked Him, which commandment is the most important of all?

And Jesus' first response to that in Mark 12, 29, is the most important is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.
This is where it starts. To know God is to affirm there is one God. Now I understand that that's foundational for us, but it needs to be said and understood.
And don't think, well, that's too elementary for me because it wasn't too elementary for Jesus to give that answer when He was asked about it. Here's where it starts. If you're going to know God, here's where it starts.
The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And yet, as we read the Bible, we see the one true God revealed to us in three persons.
[13:20] Father, Son, Son, and Spirit. I have read through a number of sources and a number of books the last three months with some things I'm working on on theology, specifically the last five weeks or so on the Trinity in preparation for this.

And a number of sources are very good and very helpful. Michael Reeves has been especially helpful if that's a new name to you. Michael Reeves is someone who has written on the Trinity and been especially helpful.
When you try to understand the Trinity, the first thing you're doing is just saying this, I want to know God. I want to know who He is.
I want to know how He has revealed Himself to us. We see in the Bible all three persons are referred to as God.
The Father, Philippians 1. The Son, referred to God in Titus 2. The Holy Spirit, referred to God as Acts 5.
[14:35] So we have one God and three persons. Now, let's dig a little deeper on that this morning. That's not a contradiction to say one God but three persons.

It's admittedly a bit of a mystery, but it's not a contradiction. When you guys go to college and you take your first philosophy class, one of the things you may study is something called the Law of Contradiction which says that A cannot be both A and not A.
Something can't be what it is and also what it is not at the same time and in the same relationship. Okay? So if you are readers, you may have read a book, one of the most famous introductions in literature, it was the best of times, it was what?
The worst of times. Is that a contradiction? No. Because the author is not saying it was the best of times in the same way that it was the worst of times.
Contradiction is to say that something is both what it is and what it is not at the same time and in the same way. So when we say that we have one God in three persons, there is mystery there, but there is no contradiction there because God is one and He is three at the same time, not in the same way.
[16:15] He is one in essence, one in being, three in persons. Now, it's a struggle for us to get our minds around that because every analogy you've heard explaining the Trinity to you is unhelpful.

Perhaps you've heard some of them. You may have heard some of them in Sunday school classes. You may have used some of them yourselves. Here's my advice advice to you if you're trying to explain the Trinity, don't grasp for an analogy.
Why? Because there's nothing like our God. And so you hear things like God is like an egg with a shell and the yolk and the white or God is like a shamrock leaf or you hear God is like H2O.
It can be water or ice or steam. I've heard God is like a three-headed giant on all kinds of strange analogies.

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All the analogies break down at some point. And most of the analogies actually teach the exact opposite of what the Bible reveals about who God is.
[17:39] One example, the analogy of H2O. God is like that. He can be water water or he can be steam or he can be ice.

That actually is a great analogy for the Trinity if you were teaching modalism which would be a heresy. So my encouragement to you is stay away from the analogies because there is nothing that is like our God.
So here's my goal in the next few minutes we have together. I want to take one specific part of the Trinity namely to show you how the Trinity helps us understand the gospel.
And then this afternoon Asher is going to teach on the gospel itself. So I want to take the Trinity and show you how the Trinity is unique in the Christian faith, how the Trinity is essential and necessary for the gospel and how the Trinity points us to understand the gospel then this afternoon Asher is going to pick up in Romans 3 and talk about the elements of the gospel message itself.
Joey read to you from Romans 1. Go ahead and open your Bibles to Romans with me. Let's just start with what he read. Let me get that. I want you to see this in your own scripture here.
[19:04] because the Trinity does help us understand the gospel and we see it clearly here in Romans 1. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus called to be an apostle set apart for the gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures concerning his son who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 1, 1-4, you have the gospel of God concerning his son according to the spirit. So if we're going to understand the Trinity and specifically how the Trinity points us to the hope we have of salvation, let's just start there.
This is the gospel of God concerning his son according to his spirit. Let's start with the first part. Knowing God as father enables us to understand the gospel. Now just think about this. if the Bible reveals God as father and it does to be an eternal father what must he have?
What's the answer? Say it out loud. He must have, he must be a father, he must have a son. If he's the eternal father father, you can't be an eternal father if there's not some other equal part of that relationship.
[21:04] So to say that God is father has to say that you have the eternal son. I'll give you an example from Islam in the Quran.

It says, say not Trinity, desist. It will be better for you for God is one God. Glory be to him, far exalted is he, above having a son.
Say he, Allah is one, Allah is he on whom all depend, he begets not, nor is he begotten, and none is like him.
The point is in Islam, you have a single person God. He's not father, he does not have a son. So when a Muslim speaks of Allah, they are simply referring to a false God, not the God of the Bible. This is not the same God by a different name. This is altogether different. you need to make sure you're worshiping the God of the Bible that's been revealed to us in Scripture.
[22:25] The problem is the God of Islam for all eternity is alone. He's not loving anyone.

if he were to be loving, he would have to create something or someone in order to have someone to love.
So if you have a single person God, and if that God is loving, which the Bible tells us the one true God is, right?
1 John, God is love. love. If God is love, he has to eternally have been able to love, and if it's a single person God, there is no one to love, which would mean God would have to create in order to be who he eternally self-existing is.
Now you have a God who is needy because he needs to do something else to be who he innately is. This is why the Trinity is no small thing.
[23:42] To say God is Father must mean that he has a son. John 14 6, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. So you've got this relationship of father and son, but here's the question. What was happening before the creation?
If God the Father is loving, who was he able to love before the creation? The Bible tells us in John 17, verse 24, Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am

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to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. And there it is. This is why God must be triune. Because God is love, he must have someone to love, and before the foundation of the world, before anything's been created, you have perfect unity among the Godhead, with love among the persons of the Godhead.
And so before God creates, there he is, loving his son, and the son loving his father.
[25:20] Doing what the God of Islam could never do. Doing what a single person God could never do. one God in three persons.

All that God does, he does as father, and as trinity, and before the foundation of the world, God didn't find himself in a place of need, of having to create someone to love, because for all eternity past, in the Godhead, you have love being expressed.
God is not creating because he's needy. When I was in high school, I heard a pastor preach, and the message, I'll never forget this, the message went something like this.
He said, if you want to know how important you are, talking to the crowd, he said, if you want to know how important you are, think of it this way, that God wanted to love, but he didn't have anyone to love, so he created humanity so he would be able to love.
That's how important you are. Is that right? That's completely wrong. What that is, is taking a God of your own making, not the God of the Bible, and saying, let me tell you how great you are.
[27:03] God had to create you to be who he was intending to be, therefore God is now dependent on who? You. And I heard that at the Christian camp.

And the God given to me at that camp was a God who was dependent upon me.
That is not the God of the Bible. God did choose to create, and through his creation we see the full expression of his character, and of his nature, and of his power, and of his wrath, and of his justice, and of his glory.
But please be clear, God did not create because he was needy. He did not create because he was dependent, and he did not create because he wanted to love, but had no one to love.
This is the very heart of the Christian gospel of the Trinity, that God before creation is not dependent or needy upon anything.
[28:23] But we can say this, that knowing God is love helps us to understand the gospel. Make note of 1 John 4, 8, and 9.

It says, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is what?
Love. We love because he first loved us, and God loves because he is love.
And if he is love, it cannot be a single person God. One God in essence, three in person. That's essential to our doctrine because if God is love, who is he able to love before creation?
Jesus gave us the answer in John 17. This is the heart of our Christian doctrine. Now, I want you to understand that God is our Father.
[29:37] He's the ruler, yes, but at his heart, at his core, God has revealed to us his Father. Now, this is important because I've been pulled over before, not many times, thankfully.

I'm on 25 years without getting a ticket, praise God. I drive very slow. My wife drives when we go somewhere because she wants to get there. But I've been pulled over before and was not given a ticket.
He pulled me over, scared me, gave me a warning, and he let me go. That policeman in that moment was my ruler.
He was the boss. He was in charge of everything. when he let me go with no ticket, and that policeman walked back to his vehicle, and I pulled out.
By the way, if you've ever been pulled over, is there anything more frightening than pulling back out when the cop's just sitting there? I'm just afraid I'm going to do all kinds of things, get pulled over again.
[30:58] It's just the worst. I'll sit there and let him go, and he's just waiting for me, and I'm like, man, I'm going to forget to do a turn signal or whatever, but anyway, when the cop lets me go, I am filled with gratitude that the ruler had mercy on me, but I'm not filled with love.

I don't love the policeman. I don't know him. I don't have a relationship with him. I have gratitude that the ruler, so to speak, had mercy on me, so there's gratefulness, but there's not love.
Now, what distinction does that make? What does that matter? Well, because when Jesus was asked what the great commandment is, he said, love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul

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and mind and strength.
love, there must be love. That's the heart of the gospel. God loved us and sent his son, and he gives us a new heart, and we're able to love him.
So, when the Bible says, in 1 John 4, verse 8, God is love, that can only be true if God is revealed to us as one God, but not one person, because he would have no one to love.
[32:47] love. And if God is love, then the work of the Trinity in our life, in salvation, is to make us reflect the one who has saved us.

What that means is, we then must have hearts that love God. But you cannot love a God you do not know, which is why you must be living in your Bible.
The purpose of understanding the Trinity is not so you can go online and engage some faceless person in debate. It's so you can love God more fully.
The reason why you study any doctrine of the Bible cannot be so that you can win the argument with your buddy that goes to a different church. That's not the goal.
The goal is that you would love God. And you love God when you know the truth and you have a heart that cares for him and longs for him.
[34:04] And why would it be said that the greatest commandment is to love God? Because 1 John 4 said, God is love. You are reflecting the character of God when your heart loves.

So, let's build a layer deeper. The Trinity helps us to understand the gospel in a few specific ways. Let me give them to you. Number one, the father having a son allows a substitutionary atonement for sinners.
This afternoon, Asher is going to be in Romans 3, so I'm going to leave this text for him to explain. But let me just reference it since you're already in Romans 1. Let me just reference it and I'll let him come back this afternoon and he'll walk through the implications for us.
But in Romans 3, familiar words, verse 23, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.
[35:17] Here's the key in verse 25, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith. So this afternoon, Asher will walk you through more of what that means to understand what's happening on the cross.

But for our purpose this morning, understand this. The Father had to have a Son to put forward in our place for substitutionary atonement to happen.
The cross can't happen without an eternal Father and an eternal Son. The gospel demands triunity. Let me show you a second thing that the Trinity means for us. Our salvation allows us to enjoy a relationship with God as our Father.
So because God is Father, He has to have a Son. You can't be a Father if there's no one else to be in relationship with. So you've got eternal Father, eternal Son.
[36:33] And John 17 says they enjoy perfect, unbroken relationship. Now what does that mean for you? Keep turning. Go to Romans 8.

Verse 14. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
You've got the Father, you've got the Son, and now in verse 14, we're led by the Spirit. There's your triune God, one God, three persons, Father, Son, Spirit, and we who as believers are now called sons of God.
Verse 15. For you did not receive the Spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, Abba, Father.
The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.
[37:58] So you see the trinity at work here in the gospel. The Father gave the Son, and the Son awakens our dead hearts and brings us by adoption to be the children of God.

Which is why it says we, in verse 15, can cry out, Abba, Father. The word Abba is an Aramaic word. the word itself relates to intimacy and it relates to obedience. Now, watch this. If God were not a father, He could not give you the right to be His child.
To say I'm a child of God demands that God is Father, but if He's Father, there must also be the eternal Son.
John 17 23, Jesus said, this is amazing, Father, you have loved them as you have loved me.

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[39:28] That's mind blowing. That God, the Father, through the work of the Spirit, would adopt you as His sons and daughters and Jesus the Son would say of the Father to those who have been brought to life by the work of the Spirit that He loves you as He's loved the Son.

And the fathers loved the Son perfectly for all eternity past. And Jesus says, through the work of the gospel, you have loved them as you have loved me.
If God is not Father, He cannot adopt you as His children. So to say God is Father is to say that God has a Son, Jesus, but to say you are adopted into His family by the work of the Father, Son, and the Spirit is to say that God loves you as He loved His Son, which is exactly what John 17 Jesus said.
God isn't just tolerating you. God isn't just putting up with you.
God isn't just saying, you know what, I made this deal on the cross, and He prayed the prayer, so I guess He's going to be a part of my family forever, what else can I do? I've given my word, all these young people drive me crazy.
[41:19] That's not how God loves His children. Because of the work of His Son, in Romans 3, you've been adopted, Romans 8, and God the Father gave His Son, paid the price for our sin, the Spirit quickened your dead heart, and now you are adopted as children of God by the eternal Father.

And He loves you as He has loved His Son. Now, speaking of love, make note of John 8, 42.
Jesus said to them, if God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God, and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but He sent me.
He says, if God were your Father, you would love the Son. Now, why does Jesus say that? If God were your Father, you would love Christ, because you are never more like the Father than when you love the Son, because the Father has eternally loved the Son.
One outworking of that, go to Romans 12, one outworking of the love that the Father has for the Son, the Son for the Father, and what we have for the Lord Himself, is that we love each other.
[43:09] Romans 12, verse 10, love one another with brotherly affection. What would be our example of love?

We want to love like Christ. And we want to love the Son, Christ, because the Father loved Him. That's John 8, 42. And we want to love the Father as Christ did, because from all eternity passed, the Father and Son had perfect, unbroken love.
That's John 17. So when the gospel, when the Trinity has been rightly understood, good, we understand that through the work of the spirit of adoption, through the propitiation of Christ the Son, that God the Father has adopted us as His children, and God as our eternal Father has all of these believers as His children, which means for each other, we are all in one family because of the Trinity.
And if we are like the Father when we love the Son, and if we're like the Son when we love the Father, then the love that we have for God will be expressed in the love we have for God's children.
[44:55] that's you and you and you and me if we all belong to Christ. In other words, the Trinity doesn't just help us understand God, it doesn't just help us understand salvation, the Trinity is what allows us to rightly understand how to love and serve each other.

So let me wrap this up for you this morning. Number one, just for takeaways, the nature of the one true God is completely different from all false gods.
When somebody says you've got Christianity and you've got Judaism and you've got Islam aren't these just different names and different terms and different nuances of the one true God?
And the answer is no. Because the God of the Bible is triune. The God of the Bible is completely different from all the false gods of other religions.
And the second takeaway from understanding the Trinity uniquely as it's revealed in our salvation is to remember that God has never been lonely and He has never been needy.
[46:38] He's never been lonely needy. And He's never been needy. He is fully sufficient in Himself.

And before we hit the last takeaway, if I were to say to you, how do you know that you belong to the Lord?
How do you know that you're saved? There's a lot of places we could go. 1 John would probably be the first place I would go to help somebody understand. Do you believe the right things?

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Do you your life show obedience? Do you love in a way a believer loves? 1 John is a great place to go if you're doubting your salvation or if someone's struggling with the reality of their conversion.
Let me take you back to one last thing that we just read. Go back to Romans 8. Go to verse 16.
[47:59] The Spirit Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

We cry out Abba Father because God is Father. We've been saved through the work of the Son and the Spirit bears witness with our spirit letting us know we've been adopted into his family.
So there's something that when you read his word, there's something inside of your heart that says this is more than words on a page, this is the word of God.
And that hunger you have to know the word and that inner desire you have to worship the Lord and that willingness you have to submit your life to the plans and the purpose of God that is the Holy Spirit at work within you as his spirit is uniting in your spirit letting you know you are children of God.
Because of the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit you can rest knowing you belong to God. The false religion of the world, when you ask them about assurance of salvation, they can't give you any.
[49:42] Now let me give a little bit of credit to false religions. When they tell you, well you can't be completely sure you're going to heaven.

They've at least got that right because if you don't know the God of the Bible, you can't have assurance of salvation. Now in their mind, the reason you can't have it is you've got to keep working, you've got to keep earning, you've got to keep achieving.
But the truth is, because God is Trinity, the Father has put forth a Son, and the Spirit bears witness with your spirit so you can know that you're a child of God.
You don't need to go through life wondering, is this real? Am I saved? When I get to the end, am I going to make it? Because God is Trinity, the work of the Spirit is He bears witness with your spirit letting you know that you belong to Him.
The work of the Trinity is such that you can have absolute assurance and security of your salvation. salvation. And the last thing I want to say to take away is this, that there is no other name given for salvation in the name of Jesus.
[51:21] Acts 4.12 says, there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

saved. And I'll leave it to ask you this afternoon to come and flesh out the details of that gospel message and how we can know what salvation is and accomplishes.
But let's leave it at this for this morning. That when you truly understand the gospel, everything within your heart desires to give all glory to Christ.
Not yourself, not your works, not a teacher, not a preacher, all glory to Christ.
Christ. And the way the Spirit bears witness with your spirit, letting know you've been adopted as a child of the Father, is that your one aim in life is to magnify the Son.
[52:39] Lord, may that be the desire of our heart, that we would magnify the name of your Son, who is our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

May we know you more truly and more fully, and may that knowledge lead never to pride, but to a deeper sense of love.
love. And may our lives say what the words of this song says, and our lips will soon declare all glory be to Christ.
It's in his name that we pray. Amen.

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