

Model Partners

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Preacher: Darren Jackson

[0 : 00] who is also your messenger whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he belongs for all of you and is distressed, for he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill.

Indeed he was ill and almost died, but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but also on me to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety.

Welcome him in the Lord with great joy and honour men like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help that you could not give me.

Amen. Sorry, should I stand somewhere else?

Good, okay, thank you. Hello, if you don't know me, my name is Darren and I don't work here, so if you don't like tonight, it's not my fault. But I hope tonight is something that you find encouraging.

[1 : 26] I love Philippians. Philippians is a really important text to me in becoming a Christian. When I was asked to speak in Philippians, I was like, brilliant. And then I read the text and I was like, oh, it's one of those random texts you get in the Bible where it just talks about old dead people.

And I would often skip over these passages in the Bible. I don't know if you do that. Maybe it's just me when I do this. But ironically, I also work for an organization that likes to prioritize studying the Bible.

But I'm guilty of doing that, looking at names and looking at people and just assuming, well, they're long gone and we need to get to the kind of me. But actually, I hope as we look at tonight, as we look at these two examples that Paul holds forth for us, we see beyond just two men who are long gone and examples of faith.

And not just examples of faith, but an example of what it means to live your life beyond ourselves. So we're in Philippians 2, which is not page 200, page 1179.

If you're going to stick there, because we're going to go through this bit by bit. That's my hope for tonight. And the whole of chapter 2 is this kind of exhortation Paul has of what it means to be a humble servant.

[2 : 34] And he starts by encouraging the Philippians just to unite together and then he holds Jesus forward as this example of how Jesus, being God himself, emptied himself and came into the world.

And then as we were looking at last week, Martin was taking us through how Paul himself is an example of that. He gives his life. He wants to be poured out as a sacrifice for the sake of others. And so anytime I think we look at any sort of model within the scriptures of somebody who isn't Jesus himself, it has to be held with the reality of it's coming after and coming in the midst of this kind of bigger flow that Paul has presented of look at Christ and look what I've done.

Now look at these guys. And we don't want to take these guys in isolation, but it's in the community of faith. But before we do that, we're going to have a little discussion in groups, if that's okay with you. If you don't like discussion, you can, well, just have polite small talk.

Who are our role models today and why? So if you just get into groups for five minutes or so, and just when you think about today's role models, the people who are put forward in our society said, these are the people, these are the people you need to be like.

Even people in the Christian community that might be said of, who are they and why are they presented as role models? Okay. Do you want to kind of draw your conversation so I close?

[4 : 01] That'd be great. What kind of, don't worry, you won't spend too long doing this, but what kind of people did you come up with?

Sports stars. Sports stars. Okay. Like? David Beckham. David Beckham. David Beckham's family values. Okay.

Yeah, yeah. He's doing stuff for charity. He's got, gets a lot of money for taking his clothes off, stuff like that. Any other people? Politicians. Donald Trump is a role model.

Yeah, okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. This is not, don't worry, this is not going to turn into a forum of, that kind of thing. Yeah. Lara Croft.

Lara Croft. Tomb Raider. Yeah? Okay, thank you, Alan. And next. Yeah, exactly.

[5 : 06] Any other? I wasn't expecting Lara Croft. I wasn't one of the ones. Any others? Nelson Mandela. Yeah. Can you stick up the next slide? These are, actually the initial version of this slide was more reflective of my character and it was essentially full of Celtic players and comic book stars.

And like, a lot of the people we look to today for who our role models are, they could be people like Steve Jobs, hugely creative. I only put Angela Merkel because it's a whole European thing that's going on at the moment and I didn't realise she was a role model until I got into a slightly heated debate last night with Johannes about the EU and what they stand for.

and it would turn out she's a role model in many parts of the world. Barack Obama, this brilliant speaker, that's Rey from Star Wars, The Force Awakens, a strong female lead.

Although, I would question the Disney Corporation's true motivation for having a female lead. It just sells lots of toys to little girls. Andy Murray, sports stars. And like, the thing is, I don't want to stand here and critique these people and go they're all awful because they're not Christians and they're all awful because they don't stand and say something truly good of who Jesus is and what they do and what they achieve.

But essentially, I think with a lot of these guys, they are the heroes of their story. Their success might point to something else or a greater ideology but they become the focal point of whatever it is they're trying to present.

[6 : 32] And yeah, within world history, you'll always see one or two people who actually is the absence of themselves that will communicate something bigger than them. But often, they become the focal point of the story they're trying to communicate.

That's not always wrong. But the examples Paul puts forward here, their objective is completely the opposite. Their objective is to point to something far bigger than themselves, someone far bigger than themselves in Christ.

They're not insignificant and they don't pretend that they don't exist but they ultimately are talking about a different hero, a different role model. They are role models for the ultimate role model.

Can you go to the next slide, please? So tonight, we're going to look at both Timothy and Epaphroditus in turn. And as I said, chapter 2 is an encouragement of what it means to be in humble service.

And these guys are both examples of this. But right from the beginning in verse 19, if you look at it, Paul says, Paul is in prison.

[7 : 42] Now, I don't know what you'd imagine it like being in prison and somebody said, what would really cheer you up today? You don't know your future, you don't know your faith, what would really cheer you up?

You'd say, please tell me how the faith of the people in St. Silas are doing. That would cheer me up more than anything else. Would it? If I'm honest, I'm not sure where on my list that would come up. What enables Paul to say things like this? Is he just deluded? Is he a bit crazy? I think that's the question I'd like us to think about as we look at all three of these characters, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and Paul in the midst of how he talks about them.

And as we look at them, you'll see this completely radical picture of what it means to be community, of what it means to be servants in the world. And as we look at both Timothy and Epaphroditus in turn, there's three components, I think, at play for each of them.

The first is their example of who they are, their service, what they've actually been doing. And that's good and we can look at that and we can learn from that and there's different characteristics and different ways they serve which might inspire us.

[8 : 53] But if we only ever look at that level, we just fall into the, for me anyway, I'll fall into the danger of purely comparison and I need to be like them. And actually, we affirm that we are all made in the image of God and therefore being given different roles and gifts and tasks and our service comes out of something deeper than just be like him because he is good and I'm supposed to be good too.

So underneath that, there's this relationship that the three of them have, this partnership, the spirit of partnering that Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus have that is also at work. And we'll look at the language of the way they speak about one another.

And then ultimately, you also see faith, the faith in who Christ is. And so there are the kind of three themes I want to draw out as we look at both these guys in turn. Oh, thank you.

So first we're going to look at Timothy. Timothy. So Timothy is also one of the co-authors of this letter from the start. And if you want to read more about Timothy, read 1 and 2 Timothy in your own time.

I have highly encouraged that. But right from the beginning again, verse 20, Paul says, I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.

[10:07] So when we look at Timothy's example of service, Timothy isn't just like, I don't know, like if Paul was like a version of the AA and you call up and got a problem, they just send out the most random person they have next on the list who happens to be doing a shift.

This is somebody who Paul says, this is the best guy I've got. This is a guy who is ultimately selfless and has a genuine concern for you. He is so in complete encapsulation with the concern and love for this church that he will come.

This is not just like a shift worker. It's not just he has nothing better to do. Paul points to him and says, there's something about the way he looks upon the people of God. He looks upon the church in Philippi and he has this genuine concern that kind of motivates him and pushes him and makes him want to go.

Now, I'm going to talk about this phrase. So, during part of the week I work as a counselor. We have this phrase called adaptive ego leadership models.

Has anybody heard of that? Have you heard of that? Jodie? Yeah, good. Now, what that means is it's where people seek to love and serve others in a way where it's actually ultimately about themselves.

[11:27] It's a way where I fear not being accepted and loved by people. So, I'll give everything. Everything I've got, I'll give it to other people. and hopefully sometimes they will turn around and affirm me back.

It's actually having such a small view of self. It's having such an inconsistent opinion of self that there's nothing there to hold on to. So, you constantly seek others for approval.

You have people who, and it will look great from the outside and it could even be very celebrated and I am very guilty of doing this many, many times in my life where actually a kind of panic and an anxiety comes in about the relationships around about me and if they all fall apart they might reject me so I'll just keep giving and giving and giving and giving and giving.

This is not what it means to have a genuine concern for the people of God that Timothy has.

Therefore, he must have some form of stable identity which I think we see in the next verse.

Verse 21. For they all seek their own interests not those of Jesus. Timothy's interests aren't their own. So again, Paul I think is implying there's a way of having concern for people which is actually your own interests just being met.

[12:46] And we all do that. We all do that from time to time in many different contexts. I do it with family members. You know, if I keep them happy I'm going to have a happy life. If I keep this area of my life safe and content then I'll give me peace.

Beltily is about meeting my need. It's not sacrificial. It may appear sacrificial but the ultimate end is me. I will do that from time to time but this is not what Paul is talking about because to have the interest of Jesus is to have an interest in others.

That's the whole thrust of God's mission is to glorify himself. He will reclaim a people to himself who he loves and pours himself out for. To have the interest of Christ is not divorced from loving people. It is the heart of loving people in a way where we're freed to do so. In my identity in Christ the things I might look to for others value, security, meaning, purpose, all the things that we can get from being in a relationship from others and we should get from being in a relationship from others are made secure and safe in Christ.

To have the interest of Christ means to know Christ, to be in Christ, to be with Christ. Something that's absolutely through the whole letter of Philippians and it frees Timothy.

[14:04] It frees him to be sacrificial towards others because they're not simply tools to be met with for himself. He sees them as better not because he is rubbish but because he is seen as loved and if he is loved then other people are not simply just to fill that bank for me.

It is being filled and so I can give freely. Now, you might think that's easier said than done and of course it's easier said than done and that's why I think you have verse 22.

But you know Timothy's proven worth how as a son with a father he is served with me in the gospel. A son with a father. That's pretty rich language so I read that and think Paul doesn't just say he was my mate.

He was a guy I go to church with on a Sunday. Oh, actually I know he's very good at running this course so I just papped him along to run it with you. Like a son he was with me. He doesn't do this in isolation.

If you take nothing else from tonight there's this communal partnership at the heart of what both of these examples are about. People working together not just in terms of the way you might work together in a supermarket to stack some shelves or you might work together in an office but a partnership where it's beyond just coincidence it's beyond just we have a mutual interest.

[15:29] He was like a son with me and it's with it's not he was like a son who served for me he served with me so although they have this kind of dynamic of hierarchy they are all serving with one another.

It's very reflective I think of the Trinity in Jesus and God. Jesus is following the will of the Father but they are both in equal parts divine in their own right and it is modelled it is modelled in the way Timothy and Paul relate to one another.

I think it's a huge challenge it's a huge challenge for me to how do I relate to the people in this room how do I relate to the people in my life not just as people I hang out with and people I have stuff in common with but actually to partner as fathers and sons as brothers and sisters as mothers and daughters that huge family that's powerful language that Paul is talking about in terms of this guy. When we have a vision for community when we think about what it looks like to live and work alongside one another to serve one another in this way how Timothy seeks to serve Paul as a son would a father.

That for me is hugely challenging but also has a slight mystery to it like what the heck does that look like? what would it look like if we actually started to live that way?

[16:49] Now of course you'll know people in pockets of community where we do do that and I've got people in my life who are at times like a father to me. Sometimes well the chances of my dad ever listening to this are quite minimal sometimes that's in the place of an actual fatherly figure.

So my father is not a Christian so I work with a missions organisation four days out of the week. so what does it look like for him to encourage me in that? Well he doesn't really. He thinks it's a ridiculous waste of time.

But my brothers and sisters have at times been like a father to me to help me to partner well with what I do in life. And that's easy to pick a missions organisation but what does it look like to do that with one another in your day to day jobs with your families when you're by yourself when you're amongst a group of people where you're the only Christian and actually everybody thinks it's ridiculous you believe what you believe.

What does it look like to have somebody come alongside you as a father the way Paul does with Timothy. And then lastly we see Paul's faith in Jesus.

So in verses 23 and 24 Paul says I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me and I trust in the Lord that shortly I will myself come also.

[18:15] Now Paul again sorry to keep repeating this is in prison yet he says I'll see how it goes but I trust that I might come and see you. What is he trusting in there?

Is he trusting in the fairness of the Roman legal system to go I trust how my case is going to go? It's going to go pretty well I'll probably get released. Or is he trusting maybe he's a Roman citizen?

Well actually the end of the end of the end of the end of the end Paul does use that later on in probably earlier on actually in passages earlier on in the Bible. But you see again it's not just Timothy's trust in who he is seen to be in God but Paul has a trust that actually regardless of where he finds himself he is essentially saying something is bigger than the situation I find myself in.

He trusts that he'll be able to he hopes he hopes to send Timothy and he trusts hope and trust in what? In himself? The situation? I think I read that and think it must be something beyond this.

In these kind of darker moments regardless of our context regardless of where we find ourselves even in these most painful situations locked away in prison Timothy Paul trusts and actually he trusts enough to give his best.

[19 : 33] It might be easy for Paul to have written I'm going to send this guy I hope that the Lord will send Timothy to you but it would have been quite costly for him to put into effect. It's essentially the most important thing I've got in my life not the most sorry because that's Jesus one of the most important things he has in his life Timothy I've got nobody else like this guy he's like a son to me I will give him to you I will send him to you he trusts enough not just to hope in the future but he trusts enough to release his best.

What does that look like for us as an act of service to trust God with an open hand with the best of what we've got? It would have been so easy I'd imagine for me in that situation to go I can't lose Timothy right now I'm up against it I'm in prison Timothy's the best guy I've got he's like a son to me now he needs to stay here and look out for me Paul does not do that at all he says here he is I will send him to you why?

because he's actually the best I've got the needs of the Philippian church and the trust that Paul has in God's sovereignty of his situation allow him to open his hands and say here is the best of what I've got what does it look like as a church as individuals as a community to operate like that to be people who in the lives of others see needs and say here is the best of what I've got whether it's our time whether it's our money whether it's our character whether it's the gifts that we have whatever it might be to say here it is I trust enough in the sovereignty of God in this situation hey I might come and see you but until that time comes here is the best of what I've got for me I have no idea what that looks like half the time because I'm too busy running around just trying to get my own life sorted out part of me thought maybe it takes a stint in prison to actually I'm not affirming well yeah it doesn't matter I have no reason to be in prison just to that's where that thought was going to go to be released to be able to force our hands open and say here actually none of this is mine Timothy does not belong to Paul Paul sees a way of reality where he sees all of this as a gift our relationships the things we own and therefore to release it is actually to give it back to the very author of the things in the first place and so in Timothy I think you see this example of his service sorry can you stay on that slide a sec his example of service his faith and his partnership and I think we see the exact same with Epaphroditus as well thank you so in verse 25 Epaphroditus I have thought it necessary to send you Epaphroditus again look at the language my brother my fellow worker my fellow soldier and he's your messenger and a minister to my need again there's that rich language of this idea of how they partner together Epaphroditus isn't just some random guy what kind of community does it take to know one another like this and Epaphroditus is also fulfilling a need that Paul has

I think sometimes when I read about Paul Paul's like I don't know Iron Man was the word that popped into my head he's like a superhero of the New Testament Paul can do whatever you want you look at Paul's life and you think yeah but that's Paul like he's almost some sort of demigod within certain aspects of the Christian faith Paul here admits he's got needs I've got needs I can't do them Epaphroditus can you help me there's an admittance of Paul's vulnerability in this where he's able to say to this fellow worker this fellow soldier let's work together on this I will not do this in isolation it's usually tempting for me to do faith in isolation where from people in this room but also from God so if I have some sort of need or problem I still have this kind of it may be a western Scotland man thing of I'll sort it out first and then once I sort it out I'll tell God about it I'm sorry I did that but it's okay it's kind of tidied up now so sorry or if I have a problem or a need in life I'm very good well it's not good in the true sense but very good at presenting it as in yeah I'm struggling with this but I've thought this and I've seen this so I'm presenting essentially a view of myself to the world it's okay

[24 : 07] I've kind of got this under control but I feel I should let you know anyway there's no room for vulnerability there's no room for partnership there because it becomes all about me again and Epaphroditus as an example of service well he was nearly dead and his concern was that they were concerned that he was nearly dead I am probably well my mum calls me the biggest hypochondriac she's ever known and when I get ill I'm an absolute pathetic mess like if I get like a small stomach I'm just like I will battle through it but I'll actually hide in my bed all day I just want people to love me well and give me things and look after me well Epaphroditus was nearly dead and his interest is that they were a bit concerned about the fact he was nearly dead I mean is this guy he's either a bit deluded he's either a bit crazy or again he has this vision for people and a vision for others that's somehow beyond himself

I mean a big part of the language through Philippians is this idea of having the mind of Christ Timothy has the interests of Christ so this idea that in our moments of weakness it's not like we pretend they're not there Paul later talks about how God has spared him from sorrow that Epaphroditus didn't die but they're not the final word one of the biggest messages of the gospel for me is the things you face the things you find yourself in they do not have the final word Jesus has the final word and you see Paul's faith in Jesus again in verse 28 I am more eager I am the more eager to send him therefore that you may rejoice at seeing him again and that I may be less anxious again Paul is willing to give his best here's another guy not got many of these guys here's another one and he was nearly dead but he's going to come anyway where's his recuperation where's his I had one like a two week holiday oh man I've gone through this big illness he's more concerned about the things that are all going on around about him and yeah as I said sorrow upon sorrow has been spared that this guy is alive

Paul earlier says in Philippians to live is Christ to die is gain that's a tension I don't want to dwell on this too long there's a tension there of Paul affirms there's something about what has come to come next is gain yet there's the reality if Epaphroditus was to die there'd be sorrow upon sorrow for Paul and that's a tension of what it looks like for us to walk in to be in partnership to be in faith and to be in active service as we actually engage the reality of the issues around about us it's not like I have no concern at all for what goes on in the life of my own life that could be painful it's holding it in a way where Paul says it could be sorrow upon sorrow if this guy died and he will die yet it will be gain also and that's where I kind of want to draw us a wee bit to a close with the last two verses Epaphroditus' faith in Jesus so receive him in the Lord with all joy and honour such men for he nearly died for the work of Christ risking his life to complete what is lacking in your service to me sorry I'm reading from the

ESV print out what I've got here if you're wondering if the words are slightly different so Paul carefully chooses his words here saying that Christ was obedient to the point of death in verse 8 of chapter 2 Paul now says that Epaphroditus was near to death and that he nearly died and it's the same phrase that he uses Epaphroditus has faced death on behalf of the Philippians who have desired to send gifts and support to Paul but have not been able to make it possible why would this man risk his life like this is he just a martyr is he just one to be celebrated has he got such little regard for his own life or again does it point back to a guy like Timothy who has an understanding of his relationship in Christ that frees him to serve and to give of himself and with Epaphroditus nearly literally give himself in the way that Jesus gave himself for each one of us and like what does it look like therefore for us to be risky risky with what it means to communicate the beauty and the love of Christ it's not often

I'd imagine most of us will put our actual lives on the line in order to do that we live in the west we live in Glasgow imagine if you ever put your life on the line in Glasgow it's because you've gone into the wrong area as opposed to necessarily for the gospel unless that's why you're there but to be risky these guys lived on the edge this was not some sort of nice little community where they all just sat around hoping that being nice enough would attract lots of nice people in so we could have an even bigger group of nice people these were guys who gave of their best took risks I'm nearly dead but it'll go anyway why?

[29 : 40] what motivates them? it has to be unless they're crazy it has to be a faith in Christ I don't see any other option within the letter of Philippians can you go on to the last slide please?

and so for both these men we see three factors which work together and I think they have to work together on one level there is this example of service but you also see within them a partnership with Paul that works itself with hugely rich beautiful language of the way we speak of one another what would it even look like to speak about each other the way Paul speaks about Timothy and Epaphroditus if my goal in loving others is actually about me then I'm not going to want to elevate another person I'll be risky to my standing I might passively say yeah they're kind of good at this this and this and then add a pile of caveats and then maybe passively aggressively say some other stuff but he says these guys they're the best this guy's like a soldier this guy's like my brother this guy's like my son you should definitely be with them to speak about each other in gospel terms is part of what it means to partner with one another not partner just in a business language but partner in life because we are made in the image of God and I know brothers and sisters not just colleagues who happen to attend the same place on a Sunday it's a radical way of looking at community and I think when you're free to do this people will notice we do this partnership with Glasgow City Mission

through the navigators on the winter night shelter which oh it actually finishes this week I was going to say you should all get involved but next year you should definitely all get involved and if it's just some sort of self developmental thing I do because you know it's nice to look after the poor I think people can sniff that a mile off they're like oh yeah yeah I should maybe do that too and it all becomes about I don't know these very developmental things we like to do to father ourselves as humans now that's not wrong but to do it in a way where it says you know what I'm so secure in who Christ has made me to be and my brothers and sisters not only affirm that but they help me to work that out wherever I may be in a way that is risky and in a way that helps me to give of my best therefore I will spend time with these people when actually I could be doing hundreds of other things or maybe if you're like me six other things I don't really have hundreds of other things to do and it doesn't become about begrudging guilt either if I do enough of this stuff if I do enough of this stuff then maybe maybe Jesus is for me maybe he'll get me out of this sticky situation again it's a heart devoted to Christ where the aim is to make

Jesus look bigger that's their aim they give of themselves they have a view of life and a view of eternity that says this is somehow far bigger than the situation we find ourselves in and actually partly they're walking in the experience of it there's an understanding of their own love that Christ has for them that frees them and that's why I think these three things have to work together it's not like you do please don't read that as step one step two and step three that's not what I'm meaning at all because actually there's times where I cannot be bothered serving anyone anywhere at any time whatever the situation and I have to be reminded of actually part of Jesus' love for me is that I love others because to reflect Christ means he has a heart for the world sometimes it's because the family of God come around me and say hey we need help over here and that could look like anything that could look like hey we need help over here on the other side of the world come with me to hey we need help showing these small acts of love in the day to day beat of what it means to be a community of God's people and so therefore they have a vision for life beyond themselves I'm going to end we're going to end with a can you keep that slide a second we're going to end with a kind of reflective time partly because when I did this and wrote this I thought so what so what what do you do with all this just go oh that's great that's great what these guys did in the past and I'll just carry on with life and what does it look like to have this vision of life this vision of Christ where he secured something in his humility for us that frees us to give of our best it has to be both it can't be one or the other because otherwise the church becomes for me a bit of a consumerist mess where it's just about me what can I get what can I get what can I get Jesus why aren't you giving me this I'd like this now as well please quickly faster faster faster as opposed to it has already been given to you therefore go how do we go with one another how do we go together as a community I'm going to read a page from my book which I realise is over here which I recommend to you it's called to live is Christ to die is gain which is a book about Philippians which annoyingly says very little about this passage

[34 : 41] I was like oh he'll have all the answers I'm going to read this page and it's a page he kind of brings an end to a section on what it means for Christ's humility to be worked out in a way where it creates a vision for the future and when I do that there'll be a brief time of quiet and the band will come up and they're going to play a song and do what you need to do in that space if you want to pray pray if you want to write write if you want to sit and think about something completely different that's what you do but I just encourage you to even re-read through the passage and don't you see two guys who are spectacularly brilliant at everything they did see two men who have devoted their lives to something beyond themselves something bigger than themselves and not because they were crazy and they had nothing better to do but because they had an understanding of a God who loved them and secures them for something beyond themselves to give themselves to others so he's got a quick reflection on Luke 7:44-48 which is where a woman of the city runs into Jesus and having dinner with the Pharisees she bursts open the door do you know the scene and she pours the perfume over his feet and the Pharisees are all sort of like who's this woman well we all kind of know who this woman is she shouldn't be doing this and the disciples and the Pharisees began to grumble saying if he knew what kind of woman this was he would never let her touch him and Jesus knowing their thoughts looks up he says why do you talk like that

I came in and you don't give me a basin you don't anoint my head you didn't anoint my feet this woman has done something that is beautiful we are roughly this is the author now not the bible we are roughly 2000 years ahead of that moment now and I just told you a story like Jesus said I would

the glimpse he gives us and then is that we live on that we keep going this world is not our end given the timelessness of the gospel and the timeless joy of heaven it is so hard to believe that one day when all is said and done when we're all sitting around the banqueting table of the lamb and we've got the new wine in our hands and reading the rich fair of God's glorious hereafter and we're celebrating all that Christ has done that Moses will stand and hold up his glass and toast to the Lord and say and Christ did this and he did this and he did that and he did this and on and on and on recounting the faithfulness of God to him and his generations over and over again and won't the crowd in that moment just blow up countless untold billions of us will throw up our hands and cheer and we'll clink our glasses raising a ruckus of praise then Abraham might stand up and raise to address the multitudes at the feast and he'll begin to recount

God's historic goodness and he did this and he did that and he did that and on and on Abraham will go telling stories and tales some we know and some we don't with his full first person recollection and personal joy of God's faithfulness then the crowd will blow up again crying aloud with gladness of the uproarious praise and I don't know who I'll sit next to and I don't know who I'll be with but I plan on running around and acting as freely as I actually am and he talks about who he'd like to sit besides which you don't need to know and we'll drink up and keep going and just as we keep going and going and going all down the line there's no time constraint we'll sing together the songs of the saints sharing in this glorious eternal moment about how faithful God was in his grace to broken sinners could it be that the first million years will be filled with just drinking wine and telling these stories then maybe this woman seen on earth through dim eyes as a woman of the night now in heaven in her glorified state and seen clearly in her identity in Christ will raise up trembling with cheer tears of joy not grief in her eyes to say he let me touch his feet he let me touch his head he defended my dignity in front of unjust men is it a stretch to think that we should live for that day when history as the world knows it no longer exists and there are no longer any great kings and great wars or great political machinations when there are no histories of countries left to cherish no more dollars when it's no longer the strong versus the weak and all that's left is the story of the great

God and king and all has been righted and the heroes are now the missionaries and the ministers of grace of which every believer can be and our eyes behold him as he truly is words will fill us the reason I read that well partly I love it I'm amazed I got through that without crying I've never been able to read that without crying there's a picture of life beyond this that isn't just a lovely idea but moments of grace and service here today trusting in that as a reality free us to serve as ministers of grace in this world so we're going to have two or three minutes to ask the question what's it look like to give my best what is that vision of life for each one of us I'm going to pray and then Judy will come up whenever she feels it's appropriate Lord God I thank you for your grace to each one of us that called to be servants and called to live our lives in a way that gives our best so that others may see the beauty and hear the truth of what it means to be found in Christ it's not something we do to prove ourselves to you it's something that we do because we've been proven righteous by you I've been given the freedom to walk a new path help us to be partners with one another in our lives to encourage others in certain places and to challenge where it's not being the true nature of what it means to be your followers and help us ultimately to see that faith in Christ that holds it all together not a role model of this world whose promises could be broken at any moment and whose success could fall away at any point but a king and a God who reigns on high over all things I say in Jesus name Amen