

This Kingdom brings Freedom

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. Hi, for those of you who may not be very familiar with me, my name is Jeremy Young. And as shared this morning, I was not supposed to be up here preaching today.

Those of you who are more regular might remember that I just preached a few weeks ago, and some were asking me when I might be preaching again, but I did not think it would be under such circumstances. I just came back from NextGen, which is a conference that some of our church members were attending.

And you can imagine my shock last night when I got home, and I got a phone call saying that my dad had hurt his back, his lower back. He sort of aggravated an old injury, and because of that, he can't really stand for too long.

He's walking a bit slower, so I'm preaching in his stead. And you can imagine then the phone call I received when my dad said, oh, you know, I think you'll need to preach on my behalf.

And then I got home and I read Luke 13, 10 to 21, about the woman with a crippled back. Sometimes God's timing can be quite funny.

[1 : 1 2] But you know what, that's okay. Because at the end of the day, we believe that God's word speaks. We believe that God's word is powerful.

And we believe that even if he can't preach this morning physically, it doesn't matter because God's word will still speak and ring true. So I am preaching his sermon, although he has given me permission to tweak and edit it in a few places.

So you can consider this a joint effort between father and son. So with that, please keep your Bibles open. And I believe there's a handout which you can use to follow along as well.

And let's listen to Luke 13, 10 to 21, and about the kingdom that brings freedom. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we are but weak vessels, but Jesus is strong.

And so we ask that in his victory, may you please use me and the work that my dad has done to bring forth your word powerfully to speak to our hearts today and to show us what an incredible, marvelous, and victorious God we worship.

[2 : 3 0] In Jesus' name, amen. Hitler killed millions, among which there were 6 million Jews. Stalin killed 20 million people.

Genocide in Rwanda, ISIS, two world wars, terrorism, mass shootings, mass stabbings even, regional fighting, regional fighting, killings.

When we look at these atrocities all around the world, humans can agree one thing. Evil exists in this world. But to believe that a personality lies behind these acts, to believe that someone tempts these people into such atrocities, a spiritual being with a name, Satan, devil, superstition.

That can't be real. And even among Christians, Satan is sometimes seen as more of some kind of force than an actual being.

In 2023, a Gallup poll of Americans revealed that 40% of people in this predominantly Christian nation don't think Satan actually exists.

[4 : 01] And ironically, even among the members of the modern-day Satanist temples, they don't believe in a physical being called Satan, nor do they worship him.

Now we are in the middle of a series in Luke titled Driven by Eternity. And all throughout chapters 12, with instructions and parables, Jesus has taught his disciples how to live in the world as citizens of the kingdom of God in light of eternity.

We are to be ready for his moment when the glory of our God and Savior Jesus Christ comes again. He calls on us to acknowledge him rather than to disown him.

To fear God rather than to fear men. And to be responsible stewards of the money he's given us. To live in confidence of his provision.

And to be faithful even in the face of division. And he warns the crowds to repent before it is too late when the day of judgment arrives.

[5 : 12] Unless you repent, he says, you too will all perish. And just before the passage that we are looking at today, he told the parable of the vineyard owner, who looked in vain year after year for fruit on the fig tree that he planted.

Unfortunately, it was there. Now today, we will make a brief stop at a synagogue on our journey with Jesus back towards Jerusalem.

And there we will learn about this very kingdom of God. The very kingdom that Jesus is ushering in. And we will also meet the foe who is fighting against that kingdom.

We will see through the compassionate Jesus the power of the kingdom to set the oppressed free. And to expose again the fruitlessness of the Jewish leadership of the day.

Jesus and synagogues. Doesn't that sound familiar? Luke tells us that it was Jesus' custom to go to the synagogues on the Sabbath day where he often preached.

[6 : 24] In fact, Luke records for us four of these synagogue visits. The first of which was in his hometown in Nazareth. You can find that in Luke chapter 4 verse 16 to 21.

And there, Jesus read the gracious words of Isaiah 61 which we together read this morning in our call to worship. You can imagine Jesus stands up on the pulpit.

He opens up the scroll and he reads, The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind. And to set the oppressed free.

To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. And then what does he say about this old piece of scripture?

[7 : 24] Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. It's fulfilled as Christ comes. This was his mission.

This is God's modus operandi. The proclamation of the good news to the poor. And the healings that Jesus has been doing. Restoring sight to the blind.

Helping the lame walk. Freeing people from demon oppression. All of these things were prophesied long ago. And they are the signs that the kingdom of God has come.

It's here. And the fullness of God's grace. His unmerited favor. It will be made clear. When sins are forgiven at his atoning death on the cross.

It's why Jesus is returning to Jerusalem. Now in the second synagogue passage. Which you can find in 4.33-37. He casts out a demon possessed man.

[8 : 29] He sets him free. Now later on in Luke chapter 11. Jesus says that the very fact that he can drive out the demons by the finger of God.

God shows that the kingdom of God has come. And in the third synagogue incident in Luke 6. He heals a man with a shriveled right hand on the Sabbath.

That's great, isn't it? But this infuriates the religious leaders and the Pharisees. These teachers of the law had defined healing as work.

And thus unlawful on the Sabbath. But Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. He disagreed with the application of the law.

He said that the Sabbath day is a day to do good rather than to do harm. And a day to save life rather than to destroy life. And so he healed people whether it was a work day or the Sabbath rest day.

[9 : 35] You see, unlike what the religious leaders like to believe, Jesus had not violated any Old Testament commandments. He wouldn't.

He couldn't. No, he came to fulfill the law. The Sabbath day of rest, well, that's his idea as the Lord of the Sabbath.

And keeping the Sabbath day holy is the fourth of the Ten Commandments given in Exodus. And so the Israelites were commanded to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy.

For six days they were to complete all their work. And the seventh day is to be given to the Lord. On it you shall not work.

Everyone, people, and yes, even animals were to rest from their work. Why? It's an imitation of our great and gracious God.

[10 : 43] For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

It became a day to set aside and to remember to worship God, to thank him, to enjoy his blessing, his goodness. It is a day to lay down your burdens, find mercy, and to be shown mercy.

So why did these religious leaders think otherwise? By the first century, to ensure that none of the commandments were broken, these rabbis began to dictate and define what was lawful and not so lawful with regards to the commandments so that they can be very strictly followed.

For example, with regards to the Sabbath, they defined what work was and what work was not rather rigidly. So, you know, people can and cannot do certain things.

And you can bet that they really split hairs and went into the minute details. You know, for example, you can untie an animal and you can lead them to the water. That's okay. But there cannot be anything on the back of the animal.

[12 : 07] That's work. Okay. You can freely walk, but only up to 1.2 kilometers of your village or town boundary.

Because if you walk any further than that, that's work. You violated the Sabbath. Keeping the rabbinic traditions for the Sabbath became very important for these Jewish people.

It solidified part of their Jewish identity in the presence of Gentile rulers, rigid as they may have been. And to be a Jew is to observe the Sabbath prohibition of work.

But this was not at all what was originally God's design for the Sabbath. And when they keep these sort of legalistic observances, you can imagine how difficult it was to live.

In fact, this legalistic observance of the Sabbath remains in Israel even today, among the modern Orthodox Jews. When my parents visited Israel back in 2013, they saw lifts that were programmed to stop on every floor on the Sabbath day.

[13 : 20] These are Sabbath lifts. So that observance of the Sabbath don't need to push any floor buttons. Why? That's work. Funny as that may sound, you can imagine how oppressive the Sabbath day had become.

How ironic, isn't it? Now, today's passage is the fourth and final record in Luke's Gospel of Jesus in a synagogue.

Jesus is again teaching in one of the synagogues on, you guessed it, a Sabbath. And he's still looking for fruit in God's vineyard of Israel. Have the Jewish leaders heeded his call for repentance?

In verse 11, we meet a woman who has been crippled for 18 years. Her body was bent over and she could not straighten up. She probably had a bent and fused spine.

Now, Luke has been very careful not to attribute every illness to some demonic origin. For example, the healing of the man with the shriveled hand.

[14 : 33] No unclean spirit is blamed. But in the case of this woman, Luke says that she was crippled by a spirit. And this was confirmed when Jesus says in verse 16 that Satan has kept her bound for 18 long years.

It was not likely that she was demon-possessed at the present time, as we read no description of some demon being cast out in this account. And so we like to ask, how did she become oppressed by Satan?

Did she do something wrong? Is there something we must protect ourselves from? We don't know. We're not told. But remember our sermon from last week?

We should not speculate backwards. So let's just live with that. But what we can do is put ourselves in her shoes.

Imagine being bent like that all the time. You know, mobility is a problem. Work is difficult. Sleep and rest don't come easy.

[15 : 45] Your conversations are awkward. Friendships are difficult to make. Your self-esteem is low. You've got a nagging bag all day. Bent into a posture of forced humility, the natural direction of her gaze toward the ground.

Being a woman and being crippled means strong social isolation. Satan had not only bent her over physically, but socially as well.

And yet, where do we find this woman? To her credit, she's worshipping. She's in a synagogue. It would have been far easier for her to stay home.

Yet, her disability does not stop her devotion to Yahweh. For 18 years, she may have been forced to look downward, but her spiritual gaze remained upwards.

So she went bravely to the synagogue, pretended not to see the occasional stares, ignoring the occasional careless and unkind words of the people.

[16 : 57] You know, most days, maybe no one took special attention of her or her disability. She was just, well, there. A regular. She sought the comfort of worship and the word and the fellowship of whoever was mostly sympathetic and loving to her.

She knew that she belonged to her community of faith. And she was, as Jesus reminded the crowd in verse 16, a daughter of Abraham.

Now, perhaps this woman had heard of Jesus and the things he had been doing. Healings, exorcisms, nature miracles.

And yet, unlike the people who may have been clamoring over one another for Jesus' attention, she makes no special request. She was listening quietly to his teaching, huddled over in her usual corner.

No appeal. But kind, compassionate Jesus, in verse 12, saw her. He sees her.

[18 : 09] He calls her forward in his compassion. And he said to her, Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.

Hallelujah. Verse 13, Then he put his hand on her. And immediately, she straightened up. And praise God. Immediately.

After 18 long years, she straightened up immediately. Her physical gaze finally matches her spiritual gaze. She turns her face up towards heaven.

When was the last time she could do that? Praise for God naturally comes pouring out of her mouth, and it fills the synagogue. I mean, you can probably imagine some in the congregation jumping to their feet and joining with her in the celebration.

Jesus had freed her from her bondage of Satan. Another one of the oppressed has been set free, just as Jesus proclaimed in Luke 4.

[19 : 15] God's kingdom is advancing. Can you imagine the scene? The celebration? Everyone must have been so elated.

Well, almost everyone. For in verse 14, we find the party pooper. The synagogue leader who goes, shaking his head.

Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. Even if the synagogue leader had known of Jesus' correction previously on the Sabbath anti-healing rule, he's having none of it.

He does not recognize Jesus' messianic authority, nor his authority to teach. And he was going to put this wandering rabbi in his place and serve a warning for the rest of the congregation.

You see, he fancied himself a lover of the law, the protector of the law. And he had the wisdom of the rabbinic traditions on his side. He thought he had God on his side.

[20 : 25] In all this, he's too blinded by his own legalism to share in the woman's joy, or to recognize that the kingdom of God itself had entered his synagogue.

And so he failed to see the implication of this healing. For in allowing this healing, God shows on whose side he really is on. God shows whose teaching he really endorses.

In verse 14, the synagogue leader angrily addresses the people, not directly Jesus. There are six days for work, so come and be healed on those days, not the Sabbath.

Sorry, your healing will have to wait until the next business day. You women should have waited until the next day to be healed. And don't let anyone else in my synagogue dare be healed today.

It's tragic. The Jewish leaders have not repented. The fig tree of religious Israel remains fruitless, even in the face of such incredible power.

[21 : 39] Verse 15. The Lord answered him, You hypocrites! Notice that Luke deliberately identifies Jesus as the Lord in his reply.

L-O-R-D. Here is the one who truly has divine authority. He who gave the law, who interprets the law, and is able to demonstrate God's saving purpose.

Not this synagogue leader. You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water?

Yes, they do. The rabbinic teachings allow for this. They had compassion on their animals on the Sabbath. And so Jesus drives home the point in verse 16.

Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what has been bound her?

[22 : 58] What a stinging rebuke. The hypocrisy of denying this woman a human being made in the image of God, what they will allow for their animals on the Sabbath?

Scandalous. And what's more, she may not have been an important person in that town, but in God's eye, she is precious. She was a child of the promise.

She is a woman of the faith. She is a daughter of Abraham. Jesus' rebuke was a rhetorical question. Should not this woman be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?

Their animals may be bound up for a few hours and they are untied on the Sabbath. And this woman who has been bound up for eighteen years, this daughter of Abraham, all the more should she be unbound and untied on the Sabbath.

The blessed day of her, God. I mean, honestly, what better day to defeat Satan and set people free from their oppression than on the very day that has been set aside to honour God, to remember His goodness, to remember His grace, to seek mercy and to be shown mercy.

[24 : 19] This move of the kingdom of God results in more division. Verse 17, when He said this, all His opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things He was doing.

In another part of Luke, when asked about when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied that the kingdom of God is among them, in the midst of those talking to Him.

How? Because Jesus' physical presence with the people marks the kingdom of God. And this healing is a demonstration of the kingdom of God that brings freedom.

The kingdom of God has come. This is a momentous occasion. And yet, does anyone notice?

I mean, if you were there, do you think the Roman or the Jewish leaders took notice? Yes, here was another healing, amazing as it was, but so what?

[25 : 39] It happens to a lowly woman in outback of Palestine in some unnamed town. Jesus remains the outsider, considered a lawbreaker for healing on the Sabbath.

The Jewish leadership continues to snap at His call for repentance. His followers are few. And though the crowds may be large, you know, how many of them actually believed that the good news of the kingdom of God was here?

This is a rather small and obscure event. And we might be left wondering, is this kingdom really all that?

Is it really so humble? So small? Well, despite its relative obscurity, this woman's deliverance contains the seed of Satan's defeat and the glory of God's kingdom.

And so to hammer in the point, Jesus continues with the rest of our passage today, telling two separate parables. What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to?

[26 : 56] It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. And it grew and became a tree and the birds perched in its branches.

Again, he asked, what shall I compare the kingdom of God to? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in about 60 pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.

Jesus says, it's okay. this is what the kingdom of God was always going to look like. It starts with a small, obscure and insignificant beginning.

Just like a small mustard seed that can hardly be seen and is easily overlooked. I mean, have you seen mustard seeds? You drop it on the ground, you'll probably never find it again.

Like yeast, you put it into flour and it just disappears into the mixture. You never see it again. It is initially unnoticeable, it's hidden, it's easily ignored.

[28 : 08] But rest assured, that kingdom grows and it will grow to an unexpected size. The almost invisible mustard seed that is cast off into the garden grows into a tree so large that birds can perch and build nests in its branches.

And amazingly, this tree isn't even just for the physical children of Abraham. You see, the word translated in NIV as birds is literally birds of the air.

And in Jewish writings, birds of the air refers to Gentiles. Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. And in a parallel verse in Ezekiel 17, 23, we find the tree of God, which is home to birds of various kinds.

So the parable of the mustard seed promises us not just the surprising growth of the kingdom, but it tells us that this grace of God reaches all peoples.

It becomes a place where all people can call home, they can find rest, they can seek out security, just like the birds perched in the branches, in the cool shade of God's tree.

[29 : 39] You see, out of the most insignificant beginnings, God creates his mighty eternal kingdom where peoples of every tribe and tongue, both Jew and Gentile, find rest and protection.

And again, the kingdom is like yeast. Just a small amount of yeast will eventually permeate every part of 60 pounds of flour and transforms it into dough.

The gospel will permeate into our society, quietly, unnoticed, bit by bit, person to person, nation to nation, until eventually reaching all the world and transforming us with its good news of a saviour, saving and changing people as it goes.

So despite discouraging signs about the smallness of the kingdom during Jesus' time, the oppression it faced, Jesus tells us to trust God's wisdom in having his kingdom start small but grow until it penetrates every part of the world.

And if you have a hard time believing that, look around. It did. Because from the restored life of a crippled woman in a small unnamed town, it hit Jerusalem.

[31 : 08] And in Jerusalem, believers who were filled with the Holy Spirit carried that same gospel to Judea, which then proceeded on to Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth.

And that lineage carried on. Eventually, it reached us here in Borneo. The gospel continues to move quietly as one person speaks to another.

As missionaries move and push forward to the last frontiers of our unreached people groups, as Christians quietly but effectively share the gospel in their homes and the most unlikely places, like the People's Republic of China and Islamic Iran.

The kingdom grows quietly and often unnoticed by the power and the grace of God. It captures hearts. It transforms minds, one person to the next, demolishing the stronghold that Satan has had over humans.

And as it grows, it sets people free from this oppression. You know, sometimes oppression from physical ailments like we see in today's passage, but ultimately from their oppression to sin.

[32 : 24] So what can we take away from this passage? Well, firstly, do not be discouraged by small beginnings. And this is true whether it's in your personal life or in the life of the church.

You know, sometimes we can despair over the condition of our own spiritual life, our struggle with our sins, our apparent lack of progress compared to the super mature brother and sister that we look up to.

But Jesus says, do not despair. God will keep you growing. All you need to do is draw near to Him. Listen to His word.

Pray. Fellowship with Him. Grow in your knowledge of Him. Learn to obey His will. And slowly but surely, His reign in you, His kingdom, will extend to every corner of your life.

It's only natural. Maybe it's your ministry. You know, sometimes you can wonder whether it's worth the effort you put in. Take, for example, the Sunday school and the English youth ministry.

[33 : 38] They sometimes seem small. They sometimes seem struggling. You know, sometimes you wonder if the kids are even listening. But let Jesus encourage you.

Plant the seed of the kingdom in their lives. Plant these mustard seeds and work in the yeast of the gospel into their lives. 20, 30, 40 years ago in our Sunday school and EYM, seeds were planted and yeast was worked in.

These children's and teenagers' lives may not have looked like much, but look what grew from there. Because if you've been coming to BEMKEC long enough, you will praise God with me for His kingdom that has grown.

Look around you. The children that have grown up to be wonderful parents themselves, nurturing their own children in their faith. They are in our marketplaces.

They are in our workforce. They bear witness to Christ at their places of work and employment in their social circles, sowing seeds for God's kingdom. They are your deacons.

[34 : 47] They are your leaders. They are your preachers. They are your mission partners. Your church camp commandants. They are your pastor.

Others of them are working quietly in the background serving the Lord in KEC. So, whatever the condition of your spiritual life today, whatever state your ministry is in, continue to trust God.

Because it may not seem to amount to much. It may look unimpressive. It may look weak, like mustard seeds and yeast, but in God's hands it will grow.

Not in our hands, not in our hands, but in God's hands. Nothing will happen if we don't depend and lean on him. Because I don't think I have to convince you that Satan is real.

In KEC in the 1980s, when many villagers were still pagan, the evangelists from our church would encounter spiritually oppressed individuals and also experience spiritual oppression on their mission trips.

[35 : 57] We ourselves have seen some religious practices where it may be obvious that the devotees are controlled by some external spiritual beings. Esther, my mum, told my dad of a childhood experience watching the Kavadi possession in Penang and how frightening that must have felt.

Or maybe you might have been to Bali on a tour trip and witness the Kacak Kacak dance in Bali. Perhaps you yourselves have encountered unclean spirits.

In 1987, for a few weeks in Cebu and then in Kapit, my father himself was oppressed by a spirit of fear and terror. And yet Satan would prefer you do not believe in his existence.

And that is his modus operandi. God. Because if he does not make himself so obvious, he can mess up your spiritual life without you being aware.

You know, don't let him fool you into thinking he's some nice guy. Many modern movies and TV shows seem to paint the devil in some sort of sympathetic light, like he's just some misunderstood guy.

[37 : 07] No, he is God's enemy and you can bet he is your enemy as well. He may tempt people like Hitler into great evils, but the greatest harm is when he keeps all of humanity quietly and happily spiraling into sin.

But we need not fear. You know why? He is a defeated enemy. The defeat of Satan in today's story points to his greater defeat on the cross and his ultimate defeat when Christ comes again.

Colossians 2, 13-15 says this, that on the cross, God made us alive in Christ by forgiving all our sins. He cancelled the record of the charges against us that condemned us and nailed those charges to the cross.

No more record of sin. No more condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And in that way, Jesus has disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. That is Satan, his minions.

And Christ has triumphed over them by the cross. Satan, the accuser of saints, is disarmed. He's lost his power to hold sinners in the depth of their sins.

[38 : 29] So you know, Satan may say to you, hey, don't you remember you did A, B, C? You are terrible. You are evil. God hates you.

But if you are in Christ, you can confidently reply, A, B, C? Yeah. I do. I do. And you know what? I've gone to Christ and I've repented.

And he took my chart sheet of A, B, and C, and he has nailed it to the cross already. Sorry, Satan. No need to bring that up again. God has already erased my debts.

Jesus has already paid for it. No condemnation, Liao. It's over for you. And guess what? Jesus is coming back again.

And when Jesus comes again, Revelations 20 10 tells us that he will cast Satan into a lake of burning sulfur where Satan and the beast and the false prophets will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

[39 : 36] It is a final defeat. He may have tempted Eve into sinning as a serpent in the Garden of Eden, but Jesus is our promised serpent crusher.

Now, most of us do not have physical ailments like that of the crippled woman in today's passage. But her bent up posture pictures the crippling effect that evil can have on us today.

Until Jesus comes again, Satan freely roams the earth. He's defeated, yes, but he's not completely weakened. And he's not toothless that he cannot battle against you.

He prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. And if you let him, he can cripple your spiritual life.

So, brothers and sisters, Satan will attempt to turn you away from Jesus with false doctrines, false gospels, worldly philosophies.

[40 : 38] So heed scripture's warnings and guard against false teachers. Stick with the gospel of Christ. Or maybe he will attempt to wreck your faith by challenging and twisting God's word, making you doubt the Bible, doubt Jesus.

Did God really say that? So learn to read the Bible correctly. Learn good theology. Stick with the gospel. And he wants to trap you in sin.

He wants to stunt your spiritual growth. He tempts you daily so that you may be dragged away by your own evil desires and fall back into your own guilt, your spiraling shame, and your sin.

But once again, stick with the gospel. You don't have to remain in sin because the gospel tells of Jesus Christ, this Jesus who saw the woman.

He sees you too. And in his eyes is not judgment but compassion. He knows your struggle with sin and he calls you to come to him and to be set free.

[41 : 57] Come to Jesus for forgiveness, for restoration, and for strength. James wrote in James 4, 7, submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

The kingdom of God that brings freedom is now in you. With the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, it is growing. It is expanding.

So don't ever be discouraged when you feel that your spiritual journey or your ministries look small or weak or humble. because Christ, on the cross, looked small, weak, and humble.

But he had the final say. The empty tomb stands testament to his final victory that he now shares with us by his grace.

So brothers and sisters, we are not sitting ducks. We don't have to give in to Satan's temptations anymore. We don't have to listen to him accusers of our past sins. We are now free to wrestle against all the spiritual forces of evil, knowing that Satan has been defeated.

[43 : 10] Sin is defeated. And the victory is ours in Christ Jesus, who frees us from our oppression. So will you continue to strive with all your God-given might and strength to give your lives to the gospel and to give your lives to the kingdom of Jesus, his kingdom that brings freedom.

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for the great gospel message that we are weak, we are great sinners, but Christ is strong and Christ is a great savior.

We thank you for the freedom he gives us, the freedom from oppression to our past lives, to our past mistakes, to our evil and to our sin. And we thank you that none can stand against us for Christ is with us, not even Satan.

So Heavenly Father, we ask that you would continue to transform our lives, that daily we may hold on to the hope of the gospel even when it's difficult, even when it's tough, even when it feels like we are small and weak and insecure, knowing that one day your kingdom will be the only kingdom and Christ will be the only true king, as he already is in our lives.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.