

November 15, 2020 - David Vinyard

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Preacher: David Vinyard

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. It was mentioned I have next week's passage too, wasn't supposed to be here today.

I also realized as I was walking up, I'm wearing Bethel colors. You know, I didn't realize the cream and the maroon and the black. So a little bit of team spirit here today, even though we're few in number. That was unintentional.

I actually want to start by sharing kind of a neat story on just the week and the preparation and being here today. I'm on the schedule for next week. I have the Thanksgiving topical message. And the year that we've had, the things that we've kind of gone through, it's been like, you know, a challenging year. And so I thought I better get a head start on this because Thanksgiving is going to be a tough topic for the year 2020.

And so it's kind of a testament to the providence of God. But I started this message, you know, sort of months ago, stewing over it, getting an outline together. And as soon as I kind of had some direction, as soon as I got an understanding of what I thought would be helpful for next week, it was like God dropped this second topic right on my desk.

[1:14] Like, go ahead and work on this too. Like, all right. You know, right as soon as I felt like I had something, now I've kind of got this question mark. And so I did.

I started working on both outlines together, you know, kind of preparing both. And the whole time I'm thinking, okay, do I fit these together in one? Do I scrap the first one and go with this one that, you know, seems kind of, not, I'm going to call it heaven sent, but, you know, just out of the blue. You know, if I put them together and go an hour long, they're probably going to stone me up here. So I can't do that. And then on top of that, I had a little thing prepared for the hayride, which we had to cancel. So I'm, you know, a week and a half ago sitting here with two and a half messages and one Sunday to share.

And I'm like, okay, how is this going to turn out, right? Well, sure enough, between travel and sickness and all that, about a week ago on the Zoom meeting, you know, I texted Dave and I said, it's interesting, we've got a hole for next week.

I might be able to help you out. And so, anyway, just a neat testament to the providence of God that I don't have as many of those faith stories as I'd like, but it's neat to see that happen.

[2:22] I had no idea what was going to bring it out. I didn't know what it was going to come to use. And here we are, pretty neat to see God work like that. So, and Lord willing, you'll see me again in seven days.

But anyway, let's pray and dive into this morning's topic. You should have a handout there, too. Thanks for passing those out, eh? God, thank you for today. Thank you that we're able to be here in person.

Thank you that regardless of what's happening outside these walls, that we are bound and unified beyond politics, beyond health care, beyond really any element on this world, God.

And that's something that we thank you for and that we've been given because of our belief and our trust in you and Jesus' work on the cross. And we thank you for that. And God, I just pray that this message is encouraging.

I pray that it's fortifying. And I pray that you continue to speak through this group and lift this body up in your son's name. Amen. All right.

[3:22] I read a quote about a week and a half ago. Someone much wiser than me said, it's easier to preach ten sermons than it is to live one.

I thought that was pretty good. I thought, especially this year, I feel like that's spot on. You know, 2020 has been quite just an endurance of faith.

Kevin talked about not watching the news. I've really struggled with how vocal to be, how much to take a back seat, you know, what level of confrontation is acceptable for a believer. You know, and our sermons have reflected that if you think back.

There was a message on building bridges to the culture, how to use these topics to speak truth into the lost. Topics around just the end of days, topics around trusting God.

Our fall retreat was around battling down the hatches and just be ready, you know. And all that to say, it seems like God is certainly directing us in this season and year.

[4:20] And I've been telling folks 2020 has been somewhat of a pop quiz for believers. That's my own personal opinion is that, you know, a checkpoint. Where are you at in your faith? Where did you think the true colors of society really were at prior to this year?

Kind of a litmus test on where's your discernment at? Where's your wisdom coming from, right? And in a very weird way, I'm not always in the moment grateful, but high level I'm grateful for those things.

And I realize that's not everybody's feeling, right? So maybe starting this message just thinking maybe that's not you. Maybe you've really been more discouraged this year. Maybe you've been frustrated this year.

I was talking to Debbie before and just, you know, the challenges of catching people in a conversation and what that leads to. And so the topic that kind of came is a lot of people are in that camp.

You can hear it in the conversations, just the sense of amazement, the sense of wonder and astonishment at what's going on, right? Does anybody relate to that or see that as a common? Yeah. So that's interesting, and that's the topic here for today, the one that I felt God just kind of placed on my desk out of the blue.

[5:31] And it's actually been a really fun study. And so the question I'm asking here, and you can see on the top of your handout, the topic is should this year, should the year 2020, and not the year itself but all that we're witnessing, should that be something that causes us to marvel?

Should we be taken back by what we see in the world? And is it right for us to be amazed by it? It's an interesting topic, right? The Greek word, this word does show up a few times in Scripture, and so what we're going to do today is sort of a word study, a concept or a phrase study around where this happens, what it gives us, and what we can learn from it.

And so I mentioned this word, it's pronounced thematso. It's a little bit of a weird pronunciation, but thematso. And the word means to marvel or marveled.

And so that's what we're going to look at today, what should and shouldn't cause us as believers to marvel. And to do that, I was talking to Kent about this too, it's really hard to fit a whole comprehension, you know, around a study you've been passionate about into a short amount of time, but we're going to give it a go.

And to break this down, I'm hoping to take us through what God showed me in three different pieces, okay? And so the first piece is, where is this phrase used in Scripture? Why is it used? What's happening?

[6:55] The second phrase is, what does Scripture give us that we should expect? So sort of the preface to marveling, right? Or maybe what not to marvel at. And then lastly, what I think is sort of the real linchpin of the study is an example from the Son of God.

So it's those three pieces. Where does this word show up? What sort of background should we take going into any scenario? And then what does the Son of God give us in his own life? And if you can't tell, I'm kind of excited.

I've been stewing over this for a while. It's been really exciting for me to learn. So with that, and I really need to hear that Bill used that word in his letter.

And then we had an example of something marvelous that happened. So really need to see God sort of intertwine all this together today. But let's start with this. And I've got a handout so you don't have to turn, but you're welcome to turn there, especially in the first couple of examples.

But let's start by looking at where this phrase is used and the color that comes with it, right? When we read the matzo in Scripture, what's happening? What's going on? Why are people responding this way?

[7:59] All within the context of thinking, okay, we're going to translate this to what should we do and how should we be responding? So the first example is Matthew 9. You're welcome to turn there. I'm going to paraphrase the setting a little bit here, but Jesus is early on in his public ministry, and he's on location, and it says the people bring Jesus a paralyzed man, and he's lying on a bed.

Jesus looks at the man, and he makes a bold statement. He says, Son, be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven you. And you might guess what happens next.

This is a very predictive... You're going to know where I'm heading, but that's okay. The scribes and the Pharisees watched this, and they accused Jesus of blasphemy, and Jesus says back to him, Well, which is easier, for me to forgive sins or to say, Arise and walk?

And instantly, this guy stands up and departs to his house, this paralyzed man. Here's the word. In Matthew 9, verse 8, it says, But when the multitude saw it, they marveled, and they glorified God. So there's a first example of when that word... One example of when the word shows up and the crowd's observing the miracles of Jesus. And I get it. That's kind of a softball, right? I mean, hey, it's not surprising to anybody.

[9:14] That would probably cause all of us to marvel too, right? But it adds a little color to just this response and sort of what's happening. Let's look at another. Mark chapter 5.

This is probably one of my favorites. I learned a little bit more about this story as I was digging deep into it. Mark chapter 5. Jesus had just finished one encounter with the crowds. He crossed the Sea of Galilee, and the moment he steps out of the boat, he's confronted by a man on the shoreline. Now, this text says this man was famous for running around naked. And I know some of you, and that right there is probably enough, right? You're like, hey... But let me tell you about this man. So he's naked. It says that he lived among the tombs. More importantly, he was tormented by hundreds of demons, if not more. Mark chapter 5 says that no man could bind him, even with chains.

It says he could basically just tear his shackles off. And furthermore, night and day, it says he was always crying out and cutting himself. So, I mean, you're still on this for just a quick second.

[10:23] I mean, this is nightmare fuel. I mean, this guy is... He's naked. Superhuman strength. He's bloody. He's loud. Walking around a graveyard at night. I mean, this is stuff.

I mean, this is... You know, you don't want to think too long about this. Now, can you imagine being with Jesus as this happens? You're crossing the shore, and the first person to greet you is that guy, right?

I'm pretty sure at least one of the followers was, you know, whatever they wore, it was soiled. You know, it had been urinated on. But look at this. It says in Mark chapter 5, when the man saw Jesus, he ran up to him and worshipped him.

I mean, what a scenario that had to be, right? I never really picked up on that before this. So anyway, I don't want to beat this to death, but fast-forwarding in the text, Jesus decides to heal this guy.

He speaks to him. He sends the demons out of his body into a flock of pigs. And immediately, this guy is free from his torment. It says he's in his right mind. And now I'll read to you from Mark chapter 5, starting in verse 14.

[11:26] It says, Now the herdsmen fled, which makes sense. You know, these guys are like, we're not paying me enough for this. And the people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had the legion, sitting there, clothed in his right mind.

And they were afraid. And those who had seen it described what had happened to the man and the pigs, and they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. This isn't the topic for today, but just notice how quickly fear grips the lost here.

Different study. Skipping ahead in the text. Jesus says to the man, Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy. And he went away and began to proclaim in the city how much Jesus had done.

And everyone marveled. There's that word again, thematso. It means they were just astonished. They were amazed at what happened. They saw, and this guy refers to Jesus, the demon-possessed man with the demons in him still refers to Jesus, the son of the most high God. And he merely speaks, and this is solved. It's amazing. And so they had no, the crowds heard this, they saw it, they saw the man, they had no choice but to marvel.

[12:38] Here's another example. Happened right before this event took place. The same word is used in Matthew chapter 8. It's the familiar story of when Jesus is in the midst of a raging storm.

The disciples fear for their lives. It's sort of the picture behind our theme at Pinecrest. But the boat's ready to break. The storm is raging. These guys are panicked. It says there were some in even smaller boats.

Those guys were really panicked. And Jesus wakes up, speaks to the clouds, and the water becomes still. And it says, then the men marveled, saying, what man is this that even the winds in the sea obey him?

So that's the type of response we're looking at today. You know, adding in some reference and color. This word, it does often tend to follow miracles. It tends to follow these acts of God. It tends to follow divine intervention in the natural world that we see. Watching the Son of God live among men. But not exclusively, okay? It happens elsewhere, and I think it's a little telling as well.

[13:40] So here's another example. During the height of Jesus' trial, he's sitting before Pontius Pilate. In the Gospels, it says the courts are packed.

And that's not a political reference. They were, you know, physically full. It says the courts were packed, full of his accusers. And Jesus, sorry, the Jewish leaders, they're just hurling these false claims at Jesus.

The corrupt opinions, the false claims, perverting the truth. I can't help but notice some similarities, right? I mean, this scene is very relevant to today. But anyway, in Mark 15, it says, but Jesus remained silent so that Pilate marveled.

So you see the same word used, but for a different reason. And how, imagine Jesus sitting there, and just, I mean, yeah, I love to defend myself.

I can't imagine the righteous son of God sitting there in silence as this is happening. But it says, yet Jesus answered nothing so that Pilate marveled. The mod zone.

[14:47] This word is interesting. And there are a few examples we're not going to cover, but it really shows up in these pivotal moments. Here's another one. The Pharisees had sent spies. Prior to this trial happening, the Pharisees had sent spies to watch Jesus, that they might deliver him to the authorities, it says, in Luke chapter 20.

Now these guys were folks that towed the line, right, between government, political leadership, religious leadership. And it says, they tried to trick Jesus in Luke 20 by asking if it was lawful for the Jews to pay taxes.

Now Jesus discerns their intent. He sees through it, right? And he says to them in this quiet wisdom, he says, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

And these cunning men, you know, these guys that thought they had him, what do you think they did? It says, they marveled at his answer. Literally, they held their peace and they could not take hold of his words.

And so it's an interesting word study. I just wanted to start with that sort of survey of how this comes up and what these responses look like in Jesus' time to give us something to compare it to. It's often the workings of Christ, but it's not always.

[15:59] It's sometimes the patience and the restraint in the face of an accuser or divine wisdom that caused folks to be taken back. Proverbs 15 reminds us that a soft answer turns away wrath.

And I like the second part of that verse number two. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly. All right, so that's just the first part, right? Where is this word used?

How does it show up? What does it mean? You feel like you have a good picture of folks marveling, yeah? But how does that help us today? This is where I sort of hit that speed bump in the prep.

I was like, this is, you know, it's exciting to see in the word, but what does that do for us? Should we be marveling at the year that we're having? Is this something that should be causing us to respond in a way like that?

The viral outbreak. I'm talking about everything. The election, the politics, the riots, the civil unrest, you name it. What should our response be? The mazzo? Let me share a couple other places this concept or this phrase or this word is used.

[17:06] There is, believe it or not, one very relevant text that I found. I guess I've never come across this before the study, but Ecclesiastes 5.8. Let me just read this to you.

It says, if you see the oppression of the poor and the violent taking away of justice and righteousness in a province, don't marvel at the matter. For one official is eyed by a higher one and there are officials over them.

Now that's talking about when it says province or region. I mean, it's governing issues. It's societal challenges. I found that extraordinarily helpful.

For my own lacking, I had not come across it in the prior 33 years of my life, but here it is and we got it. So I wanted to share that because it's looking at societal unrest. It's looking at this corruption factor and oppression and it literally says don't marvel at the matter.

How about this text? 1 John 3.13, Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you. Do we see hate in American culture today?

[18:13] Hate for the natural order of life? Hate for Christian values or hate for belief in absolute truth?

How about hate for the exclusivity of the gospel? Absolutely. And yet it says, listen, marvel not if the world hates you. This, which is obviously easier said than done, but you know why?

It's because these examples, right, they imply that for the believer the temptation is there to do so. The temptation in the thick of the moment, the natural man, it wants to do it.

I've actually, yeah, I've witnessed this in my own life while prepping for this study. I mean, you want to talk about ridiculousness, right? It's just, it's like, it's calling you to do so.

And so, there's some fortification in scripture that offers us some reinforcement as to how we avoid that or how we preclude ourselves from going down that path. What should we be expecting?

[19:20] What should we be prepared for? Let me share some text with you. The apostle Paul has a few things to say on that subject. He writes to the Romans in the first chapter.

This is the famous without excuse text. But he says later on, he says, That's a warning.

That's a warning to societies that refuse to acknowledge God. I don't think that describes all of America today. But I think it describes a good part of America today.

Here's another example. Paul writes on the subject to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 4. He says, Therefore, since we have this ministry, we have received mercy. Do not lose heart. Which is kind of a cousin to, you know, marveling at a scenario.

He says, We've renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but in the truth. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

[20:24] Here's the qualifier here. Whose minds the God of this age has blinded, who do not believe. Do you think that fits a little bit our current environment?

Paul says, Don't lose heart as a result of these factors. Rather, understand that the God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers. In other words, be ready for it.

Expect it, in a way. Here's another one. And this is not exhaustive. There are a lot of these examples. This is a fairly familiar text, but if you look at what Paul writes to the Ephesians, there's a text that starts with, finally, brothers, be, yeah, be astonished?

No. Be taken back? No. Be strong, he says, in the power of his might. And look at verse 12. Why? Why the need? Why the challenge?

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Here's the point.

[21:29] Our humanity would love us to marvel at the state of the world, at the current culture. Scripture says, here's what's going to happen, and here's why.

There are many things that cause men to marvel. Seeing Jesus work, I'll tell you, Mark's story leading up to this, I was kind of getting chills at that story, and it just fits.

You know, seeing divine healing, seeing movement movement from heaven, viewing acts of God as we read about miracles in scripture and hear about things like that.

But we don't have examples about society or government or culture eliciting this response. And if there are, I was hard pressed to find one, so please share it with me.

And here's what I'll challenge you with, because I'm challenging myself on a daily basis with this same factor. We who are saved, we with the truth and the understanding, we should be expecting it. I had a friend tell me recently, not directly on the subject, but just on a similar vein of thought, he said, the enemy was defeated at the cross, and I agree with that.

[22:40] But he went on to say that the enemy was now powerless and the enemy was cast out, that the power of sin and Satan no longer had an influence on the world. And I challenged him there.

He said, well, Christians are here in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit's living in Christians and we have this, I said, man, I don't think that's what the scripture says. I pointed him to 1 Peter and the texts that come from it, things like this.

Be sober-minded in 1 Peter 5. Be sober-minded and be watchful. Why? Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. That is not a subdued enemy.

Paul writes to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 2, following a list of instructions, get this, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs.

And it's not that he's not going to try. Here's the picture I want to share. Our enemy has been around for thousands of years, perfecting the art of deceit. He has tremendous power and influence over this present world.

[23:47] He's watched societies, cultures, and governments rise and fall. And at this point in history, I feel comfortable saying he's got it down. Honestly, I mean, it's something we can't miss.

And it's really one of our better tools to help us avoid this response to the world around us. And again, I get the temptation. It's so real. The urge to want to just be drawn off by this.

And, and, and, you know, the scripture, here's, here's the point in the second phase and we'll move on to the last bit. The scripture demands of me as one who's called out, as a son who's redeemed, that I live according to a higher standard of maturity.

Not giving into that emotional side that wants to just humor those feelings, right? Not to cower back like the world is doing in a lot of ways. My life was ransomed for more than that as a son of the most high God and those who believe here would say the same thing.

To marvel at the world and its lost culture, we're above it. We really are. All right. Got that off my chest.

[24:59] It's just been such a weighty topic to wrestle with. So we started this message though and this is honestly, this has been my favorite part of the study. We started this message with a statement that what causes men to marvel speaks volumes about our character and our faith.

Really it does. What causes us to respond in a certain way speaks to our Christian character. If your faith is in humanity, this year is going to rock you.

If your hope is in mankind and yourself, it's going to knock you over. Scripture offers us examples of what should cause us to marvel, but there is one final encouragement, one last component of this study, Thimothy, where it shows up and to see it, we're actually going to turn to the life of Jesus himself.

And here's the question that hit me. What on earth, literally, what on earth would cause the Son of God to marvel? You ever think about that question? Christ in the flesh, the author of creation,

there's not a lot he hasn't seen.

What could cause the Son of God to marvel? And if he did, wouldn't that be something to take note of? Twice.

[26:13] Only two times does it happen that we're told in Scripture. But twice does Jesus respond to a scenario in this way. Here's the first one from Mark chapter 6. It says, Then he came to his own country and on the Sabbath began teaching in the synagogue.

And many hearing him were astonished, saying, Where did this man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to him that such mighty works are performed by his hands? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Judas, and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us? So they were offended at him. Hold on to that.

And Jesus says to them, A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives and in his own house. Now he could do no mighty work there except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.

And he marveled because of their unbelief. The same story in Luke actually says they chased him out of town. Now, there's an important distinction here between the state of society, which I do not think caused Jesus to marvel, specifically because of that last text, and the unbelief of the people.

[27:29] And think about these people here. I never really captured this when reading this story. These folks that Jesus went back to spent decades growing up around him and his family and his parents.

They saw a perfect son. They saw a perfect brother. They saw a perfect friend, employee. They saw it. It wasn't part of Jesus' public ministry, but they were the ones. They got the sneak preview. They had the early screening, so to speak. Not that we go to the movies anymore, but yeah. Of all the people ever born, they were the humans who spent the most time around Jesus.

It's a wild thought, right? His whole family, they saw it. He even came back and healed some among them. And they were among the first to reject their Christ. They had every reason to believe, and they did not.

And what does it say? He, Jesus, marveled because of their unbelief. Their lack of faith caused Jesus to be taken back and astonished. Hold that thought for a minute because I want to come back to it, and this is the final example from Jesus' life.

[28:37] The only other time we're told that Jesus marveled comes from the story, one of the examples is found in Luke chapter 7, and I'll read for you. It says, After he had finished teaching, he entered Capernaum.

Now a centurion who had a servant was sick and ready to die, whom he highly valued. And when he heard about Jesus, he sent to him and asking him to come and heal his servant.

And they came to Jesus pleading with him earnestly, saying, He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation and he is the one who helped us build our synagogue. So Jesus went. And when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.

Therefore I did not presume to come to you, but say the word and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man set under authority with soldiers under me, and I say to one, go, and he goes, and to another, come, and to my servant, do this, and he does it.

When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him. There's the word. And turning to the crowd, he said, I tell you, not in Israel have I found such faith. And when they returned to the house, they found the servant alive and well.

[29:50] It's a lot like Mark's story that Daniel passed on. It doesn't happen often in scripture, but here's the only other time. And again, notice, what is it that astounds Jesus that causes him to marvel?

It's great faith. It's a magnitude of faith. By contrast, think about the centurion. This was a man who had never even met Jesus. He's an outsider.

He's a foreigner. He's a Gentile. But he is a respecter of God's people, and he had great faith that Jesus had the power, had power and influence over sin and death. He had faith that Jesus need only speak the word, and his dying servant would be healed.

And think about all that Jesus saw. And it's not recorded that any of the other hundreds of things that he went through had a marvel. not the Roman oppression of his people.

Did Jesus care about his people? Absolutely. Not the Roman oppression of his people. Did Jesus have disdain for corrupt leaders? Yeah.

[31:00] A holy, righteous disdain for those that would pervert the truth. But he didn't marvel at the corruption of the Jewish leaders or politicians. Not the state of their nation. How about the sickness?

I tried to count, and I lost count, how many times Jesus encountered a sick, dying, blind, bleeding, ailing person in his ministry.

It's a lot. The lepers. He never marveled at that. The divide between the Pharisees, the Sadducees, you know, the working class.

It's all... And, you know, you want to talk about a health crisis. He was born into a time where it was just there. That was it. It was permanent. The only thing that caused Jesus to marvel on this earth, the only thing to bring him that astonishment, it says in the text, is a surprising magnitude of faith, or in the first example, a complete lack thereof for those who should have believed.

It's an interesting challenge. You know, I don't even think... I've been stewing over this for a couple weeks, and I don't even think I've quite even captured all of what that does for me. But it's certainly a challenge of what I should and shouldn't let, you know, set me back and cause me to really take an astonished view onto something.

[32:16] As we close today and the musicians come up, we're going to close with one more song. I hope this message was encouraging in a way, fortifying. You know, really, that fortifying factor is what I was given myself.

And it's not to say this year has been an easy one. It's not to say that these things are automatic or this is an autopilot topic, right? This year has been trying. It's offered us occasions where we would certainly be tempted to be taken back or to marvel at the things around us.

And as our humanity wants to be shaken in that way, remember this and remember these words from Scripture, more importantly. Let those of us who trust in God, the God of the Bible for eternal salvation, those of us who have our hope set in things not of this world, let us carry our discernment, right?

Let us carry our wisdom about us and realizing these things that we know to be true. If there is anything in all of that, if we let anything cause us to marvel, let it be great faith exercised in those around us, those other believers.

Let it be that we are astonished at the works of God, not the workings of the devil. Let it be the things of Christ that set us back in a good way.

[33:37] I'm going to close with a quote. I try not to dabble too much into politics at this, but man, it's difficult. But I love this quote and it's from the late Justice Antonin Scalia who passed away in, I think it was 2016.

That sound right? Here's what he says. This is a Supreme Court Justice. He said, God knew from the beginning that the wise, that the wise of the world would view Christians as fools and he has not been disappointed.

If I have brought any message today, it is this. Have the courage to have your wisdom regarded as stupidity. Be fools for Christ and have the courage to suffer the contempt of the sophisticated world. That's a Supreme Court Justice in the United States Court. So anyway, let's close in prayer and we'll leave this with a song. God, I thank you for today. I thank you for the guidance, the reinforcement, encouragement, and the pattern that you've given us.

Just the, I feel like this year has really caused me appreciation for being named as one who's called out, having placed my faith in you and in the finished work of the cross and being counted as a son and an heir.

[34:54] God, I just, I'm so thankful for that and for this group here who most all of us here have done the same. I pray that you would help us call these things to mind. I pray that you would help us to just embrace the teachings that you've given us.

Embrace the right perspective on this world that we live in, God, and that you would just continue to strengthen and bless this group as we live this daily life. In your son's name. Amen.