

Topic	Why Christmas Matters?
Reference	Isaiah 9
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Speaker	Johnson Lee

Hi FBC. Welcome to this week's Sunday service, where is on the advent series. My name is John, and I'll be going through with you on this topic called why Christmas matters. So, on this advent series that we have, I asked myself, what is the advent actually? I actually didn't really know. So, what I did was I went online and I actually search to know a little bit more about it and advent actually means the arrival of a notable person or thing.

So, this is what we're going to be talking about for today, but there are a lot of traditions that I think is quite interesting and I want to implement into my family as well. So for example, there's this advent reef over here. The advent reef is made of evergreens, which signifies of continuous life in the midst of winter and death. There are five candles, each of them having their own meanings. So, they signify, faith, joy, peace and in the middle of it is actually Jesus Christ, the light of the world. So, interesting things and why I wanna do this because my kids love candles. So I think they will enjoy it. So every Sunday is supposed to light one of them, every single Sunday before Christmas and on Christmas, you light on the fifth one.

When we talk about advent, it is talking about waiting for somebody or something important that happened. And Isaiah gave this prophecy. This prophecy was given in this timeline. So, after the nation of Israel was being set up King Saul was the first King and after 300 years of it, this is where Isaiah's prophecy came and so why was there a prophecy and what were they waiting for? That's the question we want to ask today. So, what they were waiting for was actually deliverance, waiting for somebody to save them. Why do they need somebody to save them? Because the nation of Israel was actually in trouble. How were they in trouble? The people were actually suffering, because of all the kings that they had, most of them were actually bad Kings. So if you see over here, red color means they are bad kings, yellow color means they are so-so and green means they are good Kings. So I did a quick check and there is about 10% of good kings, 90% of them actually are a really terrible ones.

So they were not living in good condition and on top of that what happened was there was Assyria as well. So Assyria was a neighboring country that was looking to come and attack them and they were worried about it. What would happen if Assyria came and why was Assyria so scary is because when it comes to Assyria, they were famous for being cruel. They torture all the people and if you don't surrender many bad things will happen to you. For example, they will skin your life. Okay. If not, they may impair you as well. In fact, there was one article I read online, they said that they asked the notable men over there to wear the head of the King as a necklace. So, all of these things happen and in the midst of all this Isaiah is telling the people of Israel that hope is coming. Deliverance is coming. God is not going to let them be alone and God will save them.

So this is where we have this Bible verse. Verse 2 and 4 says,

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke the burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

So when you see this right, what is happening is really, they are waiting for deliverance. Because for the past few years things have been very challenging and even after they actually they going to exile. So it was after about 700 years only then the Messiah will come. So, because of that there is advent for them, but how about for us actually. So for us, why do we still need to remember advent? What is advent to us. Now what you see here is number one, for us advent is to remember the first coming of Christ and also at the same time to anticipate the second coming of Christ. That is advent for us and every year we go through this to remember and also to know that we are not just here chilling and we are staying on earth. There is still stuff to do as well.

So, first point that we have for today is why do we need a savior? We don't have any Assyrians, or we don't have bad kings. Why do we need a savior? In fact, I will say, you know, things are going to be all right. No, it's true there are currently there are a lot challenges in the world when it comes to, you know, the COVID, all of us know the challenges, but just give me the vaccine. Okay. So currently Moderna, Pfizer, they are coming all these vaccines, et cetera. They can cure everyone and the efficacy is very high. So what is it worry about, actually there is nothing to worry about. After the vaccine is out, is life really okay. And this is what we want to really explore and reprocess for today. So I have a series of photos and things I've found online. I just want to share with you to let you see how the world really is.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said that,

The celebration of advent is possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect and who look forward to something greater to come.

Which means that you cannot be celebrating advent if you don't think that something is wrong. You can only be celebrating advent if you know that you need deliverance, you need a savior. You need someone to come to you. So, let's look at what's happening to our world now. First one over here. Do you see anything wrong with this picture? What's wrong with this picture? Well, it looks okay. There are two kids being very hardworking studying over there. What you see here is actually not a room. This is a house in Hong Kong. So, what you see here is it is their study table. It is their bit, and it's also the wardrobe. Can you say that they're hanging their clothes? And is that you're very hot, there is no AC, so how does your house look like? So let's compare your house with your house. This is their kitchen and bathroom, they are next to each other and if you want to see how the parents actually cook, you can see the meat here and they are preparing the food. This is how they sleep. Okay. So imagine sleeping next to the bathroom. And this is not a nice condition, obviously.

And this friends is a failure of capitalism. For those people who are a bit more wealthy, they get a house like this. Those who are really very poor, they stay in this place called coffin cages. That looks like this. So this old uncle here doesn't have much money and they stay over there. Right. And friends we need to understand, this is such a happening in Hong Kong. One of the very rich countries, but the social disparity, the income inequality is so big over there.

When you talk about income equality, you can see that this is not happening only in Hong Kong it is happening in US and everywhere. And the status is showing you that is continuing to rise and the difference is increasing. So this is from US and in US what is saying is the top 1% income share has doubled while poverty has held steady. So the number of people being poor has almost been the same since 1969 until 2017. Within 40 years, the number of people being poor has been the same. But the rich has actually gotten more and more of the share of wealth in the nation. Right. And this is only until 2017.

If you take in MCO and you take in your whole 2020 inside this will be even higher. So no matter what happens, you see the rich getting richer, the poor being in their current state. So what can we do? Is life really okay. Now, if you continue on checking in, there's even more stuff for you to see. So for example, many of us go to Lazada, go to shopping and buy stuff, right. And wondering, Oh, you know, I'm helping the economy, but as you are helping economy, there's also people who are working to death. So let me share with you this image that I found online. So Mr. Kim actually is from Korea and he worked to death after working for 21 hours he called his friend and said, can I stop the next shift? I'm really very tired. I'm the rest. The answer was no, continue. He continued working and four days later he died and he is not the only one.

There's more than there's about 14, 15 of them going through this and why business too good. Your people still need to work. And this is a result as well. That is on the financial side, but how about on others? You know, so if this is a case, let's do more charity, let's help more people. Now, friends, Malaysia is also famous. This is something that happened in Malaysia. This guy's name is Richard Huchel, impoverished kids are definitely much easier to seduce than Middle-class Western kids. I hit the jackpot, a tree or girl was as loyal to me as my dog and nobody seemed to care.

So this guy is actually a pedophile. He came to Malaysia and under disguise of being a Christian, he goes around charities homes and all that to help people and what is doing is really nasty stuff to kids. And this is what is happening, but friends, what you're seeing is the issue that is happening is not just one person, is also there is lack of support for all these charity organizations and also lack of accountability. You know, why? Because when there is not enough support for these organizations, if anyone is willing to help you say, come, please help. I am willing for help, but we don't really check whether when a person comes to organizations to help, how are they really good or not? So if I continue going through this, you see also that there are no other issues. For example, I have over here, Donald Trump, we're living in a post-truth era. Now, what does it mean for, for this? It means that it's very hard to tell what is real and what is fake anymore. This is actually not Donald Trump, is a deep fake video. It's an image where it was created by somebody in Belgium, if not mistaken. And they actually created a video whereby Donald Trump is saying something bad. Too for some of the political and being there to try and do order. But in reality, he didn't say it.

So it comes to this. If you hate this guy, you see a video like this, you believe that he's reading it and so even a character assassinate is very easy. Even to cause any issues, any abroad in society, it becomes very easy because it's really becoming very hard to tell what is true and what is not true. Imagine suddenly, I show you a video of your husband doing something with another woman. What will you think? And friends, this is going to come. How do we tell what's true and what is not true anymore. What do we

believe? And I would say in the West, this is happening and it's coming to Malaysia and Asia as well. And what we are talking about is polarization. What's polarization. It means that two groups of people are basically direct opposites. They do not make friends. They do not even have to talk, talk to each other. And what I'm showing you here is the black lives matters movement. So, there was somebody being killed. And because of that, there was a whole riot happening. And in the riots, a lot of stores and shops across the home and record was being destroyed. There's vandalism and people go in to loot, they rob, they take things and run. So now I want you to take note of what's being said by this article here, he says big retailers say they don't mind the looting. Okay. They don't mind the looting. You know why, if you dare come out to say that looting is wrong, destroying property is wrong. You will be in deep trouble.

So what they have come up to now is this either you're with us or you're against us, if you say looting is wrong, it means I don't care about black people. That is happening. Polarization and all this is happening also because of the people that we choose, the leaders we choose. Currently there's no civil discourse. What it means is if you wear a face mask in US, it means number one you are democrats. Right because Corona virus is fake. That's what they're saying. And if you go online and checking out what Donald Trump is talking about, you understand that he has been always denying all these things, but friends, why has he come to appointment by we can no longer talk to each other.

Why is it from the point whereby if I actually don't agree with you, then I'm wrong? Why can't we try to understand each other's point of view and friends this looks like something small, but when the whole society is not able to communicate to really come to agreement to really discuss things, you cannot progress, a lot of things cannot be done. Now, why is all this happening to the world? It is happening to the world as the same reason why Israel is actually going through challenges at the time of Isaiah. And what happened to them was that Israel rejected God as King from the beginning of time, even before that they've been rejected God as King, and this is a result of it.

So you see over here on 1 Samuel 8 verses seven to eight

The Lord told Samuel, listen to all that the people are saying to you, is not you that rejected but they've rejected me as a King. As they've done from the day, I brought them out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.

So what happened was Israel was actually looking for a King because they had no King and they said, I want to be like other countries, we need a King to be with us, what their really effective thing is we don't want to God as King. We want to rule our own lives. God is not good enough. Let's do it ourselves.

So friends we were talking about is actually the heart of the human problem is a problem of the human heart. The problem is not with which minister is not with, which president is not with which society, which financial system we are having. All these things even if you remove capitalism and repute and you actually put something else, things will still go wrong. Why? Because the problem is people, people will always want to take advantage of each other, and they always are selfish. And that is why when we ask ourselves, why do we need a savior? The answer is because we cannot save ourselves. We actually are in deep trouble.

Now, who is this savior? Who is this savior that we're talking about? Now in Isaiah 9 verse 6 we have been given four names of the savior. Let's go through them.

For to us a child is born. To us, a son is given and the government will be on his shoulders and he will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, Prince of peace.

So these are four names given to upcoming Messiah, wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, Prince of peace, simple names. But what does it really mean? So let's go through them one by one and let's see what they are.

First one. **Wonderful counselor.**

When we talk about counseling we think about somebody sitting in a therapy chair you know, and then telling you how do you feel? Do you want this, they try to guide you on life. But when you talk about wonderful counselor, what we're saying is that it comes to life if you want wisdom, don't go to people, go to God, go to the person that you can see the past, the present and the future, and God is the one that we should go to for counsel. So in fact, counseling is so important that we rise and fall on council. You look at the first story in Adam and Eve. Why did Eve fall? What was the reason for Eve actually being tempted? It was because of the snake. The snake was the one actually telling if the things that it's not supposed to do.

Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden.

Okay. Eve reply. And they talk and their day after the council of the snake Eve decided, yeah this fruit is good to be eaten and she ate it. Counsel is very important. And let me show you a story that I have. Years ago I was in IT business and I spot a very good opportunity to be doing. So, what happened was I spoke to my friend about it. I took counsel and my friend told me, oh, you want to do this thing I know of this people used to talk to them and they actually, owners of listed companies, talk to them they can help you. They can help you to get this business idea up. So it is, I wouldn't talk to them and there was a match. They had certain infrastructure that I needed and I have certain resources that I could actually lend as well. So we worked together, we signed a whole agreement and showed us agreement and we got everything done. Right. But what happened was after one year of working on it, the product actually really came to market and it was something that was really good. But what happened was after the product went life, I got news that they took the entire product and they tried to generate revenue from a different company. So, they copied it out, put it somewhere else and try to generate revenue on their own without me. Now, friends actually tried my entire experience with them I started to see problems coming. I actually knew that there was something that's been done that was not right. But what I thought in my head was, well, yeah, I'm a Christian, but they're not so, you know, they do something which is big gray. I don't really know lies. Okay. That just as long as they can help me, I don't really care.

So that was what I was doing. Right. I took counsel from a friend and after that, so it looks like such a good opportunity. Let's do it. And this is why I did it, friends at the end day, I reset my whole life. Yeah. Right. And it was a very painful journey for me. Now definitely God let me learn a lot of stuff through it as well and I grew through the experience and we know that, you know, all things work together for the

good of those who love him. We know all this, but it doesn't put out the fact that actually, if I actually took counsel from God from the start, things will be different. Don't you agree?

Let me show you if I actually read the Bible at the time and remember Psalm 1 verse 1,

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers. But whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on his law day and night

Actually, if I read this and I know that these guys I'm dealing with not very good people to deal with. I should have stopped dealing with them from the start, no matter how nice it sounded. So friends, that was my experience and friends I am going to share with you when it comes to counsel, you really need to get God's counsel, don't listen to people who knows the future. Things may look very good, especially in terms of business or even your career friends. Okay. For those of you young adults, or, you know, you're in your old levels or your SPM, you're looking to graduate. You're wondering what to do. Friends, don't seek counsel from your peers. Ask God, take the time to really ask God what should I do? Because this God loves us and he will help us. I hope this story can help you to understand counsel is very important and get your counsel from God.

Now, the second thing we're talking about today is mighty God. When I say the word mighty God, it doesn't sound anything powerful to you. You know, this guy is powerful. I say things like, for example, artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, machine learning for us, we, it comes to a mind. It comes to our mind that there's something very powerful over there, but when it comes to God, for us, somehow it's actually become very mild and we don't really understand what it means, so if you really want to understand what does mighty got mean? You don't understand for the Israelites, what do they see? God as. Who is God actually? And what you see is this is the ark of the covenant. And there was a story in Samuel where the ark of the covenant was being brought to war against the wishes of, you know, in the wrong way I was being brought to war. And so the Israelites were being punished and they lost the war. And this ark of covenant was being taken away to the Philistines land. And this story, what you see is no matter where the ark went, they actually inspired awe and fear in everybody out there. Because no matter where the ark land people started dying, there were tumors, there were rats everywhere. So from city to city, once they heard that the ark of God is coming, they were already very afraid.

At the end of the day, what they needed to give a peace offering and send the ark back to Israel and friends this is God. If you talk about God, you can remember in the days of Moses, what happened, parting the red sea and all this and friends when we talk about God and God is really, really mighty. And so if you have any problems, any challenges in life, and you need someone to help you perhaps ask God, God is here to assist us and he wants us. He wants a good for us as well. So don't forget. At the end of the day if you have any issues, always come back to God, God will be there for us.

Everlasting Father. So this is a photo of a baby and I'm a father myself now have two kids. So I find that having a father is actually very nice. You know, when your father, you actually have somebody to take care of you, care for you, you don't even need to worry about anything. My kids don't even worry. I really plan out for them, you know, what's going to happen next. So there is a lot of things that we do. We provide,

we want to take care of our children and the same goes for my father. I have a father and my father takes care of me as well. So he helps me a lot with things and is always nice to me. It be surprising, that I've not heard my father getting angry for at least the past 15 years and he is always there for me and for what I need, get me groceries, helping with the kids, helping with the house, even helping out with work. He helps me all these things. So having a father is actually very special. When it comes to fathers, human fathers will always fall short. I will fall short. Sometimes my kids tell me Daddy can you read me a story and I say, okay, okay I'm coming, I'm coming. So there were a few times when I say I'm coming in the end when I reached their room then actually fell asleep already. Why I was too tired. I wanted to watch my TV. Fathers will always will fall short and in our lives, perhaps we may have actually experienced times when our fathers have fallen short. And this is actually some statistics given by the US, when your father is absent, these are things that can happen. 63% of youth suicides happen in homestead. 90% of homelessness and runaway children are from such families. When the father is not there, all these things are happening, dropouts, behavior disorders, or even rapists with anger problems, fathers are important and God wants to be our father.

But more than that, he is our everlasting father, which means that you don't need to worry about your father not being there. He'll always be there for us. He knows everything. You know, knows what's going to happen. And he is there to defend us, to protect us and to help us. So we can be very thankful that, you know, God was to be a father and for us to actually experience the love that he has for us.

PRINCE OF PEACE:

This name is again, a very normal name you hear. And when I was young, I saw this photo a few times already. You know, you obviously Jesus riding donkey and so peace. What does peace mean to us? Peace is actually the word Shalom in the Bible. What is Shalom? Shalom is more than just peace. Peace means basically in our terms somebody just no fighting. But it means much more than that. Shalom means also not only the absence of actually fighting but also both parties mutually agreed to say that we are on good terms because you can use law to say that from now on you cannot fight. Real peace is when both parties actually agree to say that they want to have a good relationship.

Shalom also means bringing restitution. If something has been done wrong restitution will be done. We do something to make amends. Shalom also means completeness, which means that you feel that everything in life is actually perfect. It's a wholeness and satisfaction and this spiritual, social and physical flourishing only comes from God. That is Shalom. And God wants to give us this Shalom that we are talking about here. The best picture for you to see what Shalom is, what is Prince of peace is, is this photo. This is Shalom where we are being brought back to days of Adam and Eve, where we are in harmony with each other. No more fighting. The lion and the lamb, the animals can all be together. There's no issues. There's no more wars and everybody leaves peacefully. That is peace.

Who is this savior? That was our question asking earlier and this savior it that we have is Jesus Christ. What does our savior want from us? That's the next question we have. When Jesus came to the world, he died for our sins and he actually got resurrected and he is waiting for us again and will come again. But what does our savior want from us? So over here, what I'm going to share with you is Jesus has given us peace with God and in Romans 5 verse 1 to 2 it says that,

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

God wants us to firstly make peace with God, because if you really want to have peace amongst people, you firstly have to peace with God first, because God made us, he knows how we're supposed to work, how we are supposed to live, how we are supposed to relate to each other. Therefore, the wisdom of the world really is in God and Jesus wants to give us this peace. Now, I have this photo that I want to share with you. If you want to understand what Jesus really wants from us, I want to share with you that many times we always think that, becoming a Christian is like getting a bus ticket and just waiting for time to go to heaven. After you've done the sinner's prayers, done already, now I can just relax, play my PS, do whatever I want, go and makan makan, go around, do my stuff, I'm just waiting to die. You know, that's all I'm doing. Right. But friends, when we talk about this Shalom that God wants to give us, is way more than that. And so I've this story over here. Let me share with you.

This is a story of a goldfish. This is not black fish. This is a goldfish. Now this is something that they're very famous on Tik TOK, and there's this lady he brought home a 10 year old sick and dying fish over here. So this fish was sick and dying in the patch saw, and nobody wanted it. This girl brought it back and this fish cannot swim. So it was a fish, but you cannot swim. Right. It always laid on the substrate and it always have problems because lesions and the fins were not working properly. This girl love the fish, cared for the fish and gave the fish a name. The fish is called Monstro. She set up a shallow hospital tank to help the fish to get better. So you see there's something wrong with the fish and slowly after week, the fish began to eat. The girl actually thought the fish would die, but she continued caring and helping this fish. And so after a while, the fish started to eat and started to swim. And the amazing thing happened after that, the fish change his color from black and became to become golden. And it got really big as well. And so now it's actually a goldfish. From a black fish has become a goldfish.

So friends, while for those of you, in some thinking about a long theological discussions this shows you really what God wants to do with us. God wants to really take us from whatever dirt or whatever situation we have and really help us to get out of the mess we have because we're in deep mess, but sometimes we don't even know we are in it and God has a biggest plan and best plan for us. And so he wants to help us with all these things that I've shared just now. So this is comparison for you to see, from a black fish that is very thin and not looking good until this one and how does this relate to us now, coming back to this chart that I have here, we know that Isaiah's prophecy came here and after that they went to exile.

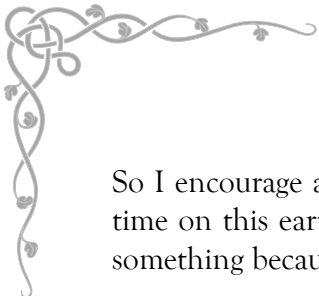
So advent is for us to remember Christ came and Christ is going to come again and we are here in the present. We've been waiting for 2000 years and we are patiently waiting. We don't know when Christ is coming, but I want to share with you something else that I want to put on this slide. And that is number one, Christ didn't just leave us here. So the Holy Spirit has been given to us and so we actually walking daily with God and making sure that we can actually know what God wants us to do. And he is here to guide us daily. Number two, instead of patiently waiting we are supposed to be actively waiting. It means that instead of sitting on a sofa, everyday thinking of what to eat next? What to To cook next, where to go next? Which holiday destination next after COVID was the first thing I do, which vaccine think we should be actively thinking, you know, what are we supposed to do next? Is there somebody that can help? Is there some way I can serve is somebody that's in need?

So why? Because this Shalom from the Prince of peace does not start after the second coming of Christ, it can start today. And it starts through us because for some reason God has decided to use us to be his agents of Shalom and friends therefore, I strongly encourage you to use your time and all you can to serve, together with God. And it's a very exciting and adventurous journey that you can have. N how can we do in our lives? And I'm so let me, I'm just taking some stuff from Facebook to show you what I see. perhaps a few things we can do. Number one in your work, instead of just doing the normal nine to five. Okay. Time to go off and you just go off perhaps go to extra mile go the extra mile so that your employer or your colleagues can see that you're different. If somebody is in need of help, somebody doesn't know how to do something. Don't just say that, Oh, too bad for you. You're going to get a bad rating, go and try to help them, serve each other. At the end day, if we can continue to serve each other, people will see. So I have a few examples of video show to you.

Hannah Yeo did some story reading for kids in this year's mother's day, dream MCO and friends she didn't need to do that. And in fact, you know, many people after it become politicians, right? You don't see them after the election. They only come up before election. Right, but for Hannah Yeo she does a lot of stuff. You will always see her doing something because friends she's a self-professing Christian, and she is trying to serve. We can also do that. So some of us, maybe you're not politics, we're not in politics. We can do other things in our own career, in a work that we have. Yeah this is my friend. . She came back from, uh, overseas. She had just started in Wharton, but she decided to come back to Malaysia because she went to start this company called Earth Heir as well to rebuild the nation. And she said that we always complain. Malaysians are famous for complaining saying that this testing is bad, particular, bad nation is bad. Everything is if we always, if everybody leaves some country. That can cannot be enough nucleus in the country that cannot be enough agents of change for things to happen. And therefore she says that she wants to come back and drive change in the country. So these are things that we can do.

We can even just do what God asks us to do,

Besides serving in our original occupations, our family, and maybe to our neighbors. I want to encourage all of you do something extra. And what is that? This is what I would like to encourage all of you to be besides serving in all this, we can also serve in FBC and FBC needs help. The church is actually comprising of every single one of us and it is not something that is being left to the pastors or the elders, or only a few of us, everybody is supposed to be serving together. And it's a great joy and privilege to be serving the King of Kings and the lord of lords. So I want to share with you, something I really appreciate from the FBC Kindy school. This is what my son has been doing for past six seven months since MCO until now. So have Teacher Gen, Teacher Emilyn, Teacher Fion and Teacher Cindy, week in and week-out helping to make sure that there is Sunday School for my son and all the other kids and how their Sunday school when there's actually not able to come to church. What they've been doing is they've been having Zoom sessions with my kid and my son is only six years old. So there's a lot of challenges, but they continue to persevere and put in effort. So besides the normal Sunday School, they even asked them to do crafts, you know, send them homework, something to do some nice cross because kids love it to make sure that they kids are connected to God and Sunday School and environment can continue to be there. And the children will be able to know who Jesus is as well. So aside from that, we can serve in so many different ways. So in front of me, I've looked I've Malcolm over here serving as well. Right. So we can be serving and I'm actually here on a Saturday and they are just spending a Saturday doing this.



So I encourage all of you to find a way to serve. If God has given you some talent, if God has given you time on this earth, the fact that you listened to me means that you hear, so come and serve together, do something because I want to read to you the final verse from Isaiah 9

Of the greatness of his government and peace, there will be no end, he reign on David's throne and over his kingdom establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness. From that time on and forever, the zeal of the Lord, my will accomplish this God's kingdom has, is really here as we started and invite all of you to come. And make this a EBC really good church so we can serve one another. And people from the outside, look at us. They, we know that in the same way, let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven.