

So let's say this together:

[Reading: Psalms 145:1-21] Amen. You can take your seats.

Bless God, where shall we start? Thank goodness. To quote Martin Luther: I am free, I am free thank God, I am free. Amen. Let's all stand up and say "Thank God I am free! We are free. Amen," I am here to declare to you that you are free in Christ. Amen! He has purchased us with his own precious blood; we are free. We don't need to be bound, we don't need to be chained down – we are free! And I will echo Crispin's prayer, and Father, in the name of Jesus, I just break every chain, I break, Father God, every bond upon our brothers' and sisters' minds, and Father God, we break that power in the name of Jesus, and I release your freedom into this place. I release, Father God, my brothers and sisters into the freedom for which Christ has purchased us. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Father, here we are today. Father I look out among my brothers and sisters and I see your greatness, I see your goodness, for they are the works of your hands. And Father, I just ask you, in the name of Jesus, that you would out pour yourself in this place today. Father that we would know your manifest presence; let the cloud of your glory descend upon us today Father. Holy Spirit, we know that you are here, we acknowledge you; this is about Jesus: we ask that you would exalt Jesus in this place. We ask Father that you would reach forth with your arm to perform signs and wonders; Father God that you would set people free; Father God, those that are bound by sickness, disease and infirmities – I rebuke it in Jesus' name. Father I pray that you would heal their bodies: those who have been tormented through trauma, through loss, Father God, of family members who are hurting, Father God, emotionally hurting, Lord, I pray that you would heal their souls. Lord, heal their bodies. We ask it in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Now today we're going to start a bit differently today. I must admit that when Crispin first approached me to preach on Sunday I really wanted to do a Jonah. I didn't tell him this on the phone. It's been a good number of years since I've preached, and most of my preaching has been done on the streets – different type of preaching. So notes for me are a difficult thing, because I just tend to go off in tangents – because if the street preaching. I really wanted to do a Jonah, but because I love animals and I'm against animal cruelty, I thought I'd spare the whales, you know, that torment.

So today we're just going to start a little bit differently, and we're going to start, because I believe in the power of confession and declaration. I think one of the problems in the Christian church, and we're going to get in our scripture today, is that we have lost a sense of who we truly are. And I think that the way that we can bring that identification back, or that positioning in our faith back, is by confessing and declaring the Word of God on our lives. It does two things:

- 1) you align yourself with God; and
- 2) it actually increases your faith,

because you are agreeing with God, and there's nothing that delights the heart of our Father more than when a child believes his word. It really is: if God has said it, he means it; therefore if he means it, we just simply believe it, we accept it and we proclaim it. So, again, to do a very Baptist thing, we're going to stand up and we're just going to confess. Please follow after me:

I am what the Word of God said that I am
I am in Christ
I am a new creation
Old things have passed away
Behold all things have become new
My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who lives in me
Whom I have from God
I am not my own
I have been bought at a price, therefore
I glorify God in my body, in my spirit which are God's
I am not in the flesh, but I'm in the Spirit
for the Spirit of God dwells in me
I am joined to the Lord
And I am one Spirit with him
I am in Christ, and Christ is in me
I can do what he says I can do
For Christ by his Spirit dwells in me

Hallelujah, give the Lord a clap. We confess it because Hebrews 4[:14] simply says (you can sit down...I'm sorry, get up, sit down, get up, sit down, soon I'll have you on your knees – that's not the sort of message we're preaching today: to get you on your knees) “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the Heavens, Jesus the son of God, let us hold fast our confession.” It is important that we confess the Word of God. (And may I just say, I didn't confer with Crispin this morning, but I was so happy when Crispin actually got us to all read that Psalm out together as a body. I was nearly moved to tears – I really was. I don't know about you but I just sensed the presence and the glory of God in it. Even today, I don't know if this resonates with you, but I just sensed a presence of God's love, and there's a freedom. There's a freedom in the place. And I would challenge you to begin to step into this freedom, to allow those chains to fall off in the name of Jesus, Hallelujah.)

So, Psalm 145 (I will give you permission, listen, if I go on too long – I've been given 20-30 minutes – if I go on a bit too long, please, everybody stand up and tell me to get off the stage. Right, I won't be offended. Right. Or you can get a hook and pull me out, or do whatever. Trust me, you'll be doing yourselves a favour. Amen.

So, ok (I'll read it from the NKJV) [Reads Psalms 145:1-3] “...unsearchable” - I've got it in brackets here “beyond our understanding”. Now, today I've been given a task (and it's an impossible task really): today I will be trying to sound and to look at the depths of God's greatness, goodness. It's almost an impossible task. When considering the goodness of God, it is probably appropriate at this moment in time to throw in the towel and admit defeat, at this point, because it is unsearchable, it is inexhaustible, it is incomprehensible – we simply cannot completely understand it: at best, I would say, we are scratching at the surface. For some of us who have tasted God's goodness there is more, and there is more! I was speaking to Audrey this morning: the more I get closer to God I realise (and I'm not being sacrilegious when I say this) I related to being like an onion: the more you peel, there is more to see, there is more to peel. The further you go into God, and the further you go into it, you realise how little you really fully understand, especially of his greatness, and of his goodness. I'm absolutely convinced this morning that if we were to marshal and bring together the world's finest intellectual minds, we shouldn't be surprised even the finest and wisest among us would struggle, if at best have great difficulty, trying to do justice

in describing the greatness of God. There would be a great difficulty.

Like I said before, it is completely inexhaustible; so in a sense we kind of try and understand something that we can at times feel, but we can't fully comprehend it. And so, to this end we have the apostle Paul. In Romans 11:33, the apostle Paul, in contemplating and thinking about God's plan for the salvation and the redemption of man, concedes and bursts forth with praise and worship, admitting that saying indeed that his wisdom and his knowledge are a depth of riches. His judgements are unsearchable and his ways are past finding out. This is Paul, the man, the great apostle, who wrote two thirds of the Gospel, and he is, at this point, conceding the fact that it is just beyond our comprehension, it is beyond our understanding. And so the only course of action to Paul is: he falls down in worship and praise. We have in David here "I will exalt the Lord at all times". Like David, Paul is taken in awe of the greatness of God.

And I think it is the only perfect and only response that is worthy of our Lord and king: when we are confronted face to face with the greatness, and the goodness, and the majesty of God, the only possible thing we can do is really to worship him. I think sometimes we don't fully comprehend who we are worshipping: we are worshipping the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the creator of Heaven and earth. And sometimes we can let our dignity get in our way. We're talking about David, a man who was called "I have found David, a man after my own heart"; we're talking about David who danced before the Lord in his outer garments, and he was mocked for it – and we know the consequences of that. David was a man that really loved God – he had no dignity about it – he just really, really worshipped God. He knew how to worship, he was a praiser, he was a worshipper.

And I think that Psalm 145 is a great example of how we should, and could, worship. And so, he starts with "I will exalt you". That is a firm commitment. David, in himself, has implored himself on the road of praise and worship. He has firmly decided that "I will worship and praise the Lord – come what may, come what circumstances in my life, I will exalt and praise the Lord." The thing is so many of us hold back because we think that praise and worship is about how I feel, it is about whether or not the musicians sound good, it is about whether or not Crispin is a good singer or not (and he is, by the way – thank God for that gifting). It is not about a feeling, it is an attitude of heart – regardless of whether we're up or down, regardless of whether we're on the wrong side of the tracks, it is about my heart attitude before the Lord. Amen?

So David says "I will exalt you, my God, O king." The word in its original context means "to raise up, to life up" – you know – "to exalt, to set on high, to magnify." We are, as Christians, called to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives, we are called to exalt him in our hearts, we are called to praise him and to worship him in our homes, in our churches, in our society, in our work place, in our school – be whatever you may be, we are called to be praisers and worshippers and exalters of the Lord Jesus Christ, for there is no other name that needs to be exalted. We are called to exalt him.

1 Peter 3:15 says this: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." It is a command: we are called to set the Lord Jesus Christ, to sanctify him – to sanctify God in our hearts; this means to give him reverent honour. To exalt him – that's worship and praise.

This word "exalted" is by definition the highest form of praise and worship. It is to take something and to just exalt them to the highest place of honour. And, really, in our lives we're to place Jesus in the highest place of honour in our lives. There are things in our lives that have taken that place.

There are things in our lives that have taken up his throne. And those things we need to discard of because *he* is the king, *he* is the Lord of lords, and he rightly deserves to reign and to rule in our lives, he rightly deserves to be King in our lives. And so it is I will exalt, I will set Jesus in the highest place in my life: I will set Jesus above my work, I will set Jesus above whatever it is that I am doing; I will set Jesus on high – he must come first. He must come first.

But when I was reading this psalm I was thinking to myself “But why is David so excited about declaring and singing about the goodness, and the love, and the mercy of God, and the justice of God?” It's a normal question: Why? And then he goes on to tell us: because God is great (verses 1-6), because God is good (verses 7-10), God is faithful to guarantee his promises (verse 13), for God's glory (verses 11-13), and God's Grace. David was praising God because he understood something about God, he understood him to be great, to be good, to be a God full of glory, to be a God that is merciful and graceful. And so he's worshipping and praising God. You know, such a heart cannot but overflow with praise and worship – David had much to be thankful to God for, he had much to praise God for.

But I think when we think about greatness, sometimes we kind of lose the wood for the trees because we think of greatness in some ways of an attribute, a talent, an ability, a characteristic. For some of you who like football, you know...how many of you here like football today? You like football, you'll have your favourite footballers. Now me being Portuguese, of course I'll be biased: I would say that Rinaldo is a great footballer – that's up for opinion and discussion. If you like music, you know for some of us you would say that Michael Jackson was a great artist – in fact they called him “the king of pop” but I'm here to declare that there's only one king, and that's Jesus Christ himself. If you like painting you may say that van Gogh was a great painter. If you like classical music you might say that Mozart was a great composer. (I'm trying to be inclusive to everybody.) Who is the current, you know, musician that everybody's raving about, that you think is really great?

But, the thing is this, we are attributing greatness to a specific ability or talent. In some way – in many ways – these people all had their flaws. Why? Because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. So we're really applying, we're really ascribing, greatness to a particular talent that they may have. But when we speak and when we consider the greatness of God, we are describing who he is. You know, Greatness is what *he* is – that's his essence. He is great in wisdom, he is great in power, he is great in knowledge, he is great in love, is great in grace – he's all these things. He is great!

God is not great because he does great things, as some people would think, he does great things because he is great – there's a difference. Greatness means to dignify and magnify – magnificence, magnitude, great actions, great deeds. This is all true of God: he is great in deeds, he is great in actions. But is it very important to actually go back and see how the word translates this word (and we're predominately concentrating on the Old Testament here). II Samuel 7:21 translates it as “great things” - God is great in the things that he does. II Samuel 7:21 “awesome things” - God is awesome in the things that he does. I Chronicles 17:19 simply translates it “greatness”. That word just kind of says it all: he's indescribable. I Chronicles 17:20 says “awesome deeds” - God is awesome in the deeds that he does. Esther 1:14 (and I love this one) “majesty”. How do you describe majesty? I believe that “majesty” is (although it describes God) the fringes of God's glory because there is a deeper measure of God's glory, and I think that “majesty” is just that shining of God's glory.

But why is this important, that we consider this? Because the greatness of God can be concretely

evidenced by his acts and his works. Indeed, in this psalm, the words “works” and “acts” are mentioned eight times. So it is one of the main reasons why David is worshipping and exalting God. We can see this if we go over to the New Testament, we can see the greatness of God being in manifestation – and that’s Luke 9:43 (you may want to look at it, you may not). In Luke 9:43 we have the story where the young man – a father brings his young man – he’s an epileptic (that’s in Matthew 17[:14-21] if you want to follow the story). We have the young man, he’s an epileptic, he’s possessed of a demon who throws him into a fire, and he comes before the Lord, and the apostles couldn’t set him free, and he basically begs the lord to set him free. And when the Lord does Luke 9:43 says this “And they were all amazed at the majesty of God.” Now that word “majesty” can be translated “greatness”.

We see the out flow, we see the manifestation of the greatness of God. Were they amazed at Jesus’ presence? No. Were they amazed at what he was saying? No. They were amazed at the power and authority that Jesus used to set this captive free. In other words, the greatness of God is above any demonic force. And so we see, just for us as New Testament believers, how the greatness of God can be manifested. We see it in creation. We see how God in his greatness and awesome power set the captives free, brought the Israelites out of Egypt into the promised land. We see the greatness of God at the parting of the Red Sea. We see the greatness of God with the tumbling down of the walls of Jericho. We see the greatness of God when he takes his people into the promised land, and he subdues their enemies before them. That is the greatness of God. That is the God whom we serve.

Luke 9:43 defines greatness as this: magnificence of the majesty of God, of the visible splendour of the divine majesty as it appeared in the transfiguration of Christ. That’s how Luke 9:43 translates that particular word “majesty” which can be translated greatness.

And why must we praise him? (This brings us to right home.) Verse 3: “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.” This verse is kind of the linchpin of the psalm, it is verse that kind of sets the tone for the whole psalm. “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.” We must praise him for his great works, and his great works we must acknowledge, and we must declare. We praise him for his presence for it is infinite, we praise him for his power for it is untameable, we praise him for his wisdom and knowledge because it is incontestable, we praise him for his glory and brightness because it is overwhelming, we praise him for his dominion because it is boundless, we praise him for his authority because he is without equal in power, we praise him for his sovereignty because it is incontestable, and we praise him for his all knowing, his omniscience, for it is irresistible. Hallelujah.

Now, when I was thinking about psalm 145, and I couldn’t really go any further than the first and second verse, and I was just thinking about the words, and the first thing that I was thinking about (‘cause I’m a how-to person – there’s no point you telling me “well brother, you know, you just need to hear from the Lord” but then he don’t tell me how to hear from the Lord. When I was a young Christian, I’d see a great preacher come and they would preach up a storm, and they would tell me these things and they would have an altar-call, rush down to for the front, get hands laid on so that I could catch what they had, but I had no understanding: I went down stupid and I came out stupid because there’s not the how-tos. Sometimes it is important that we give the people how-tos), and in this context I began to think “Well, I’ve given you the whys as to why David worshipped God, but I wanted to know *how* David cultivated and nurtured a heart of worship and praise. And I was thinking of this. I believe the Lord took me to psalm 51. What a psalm! You

know, not the psalm I would have chosen, but it's just psalm 51 – we just quickly have a look at it.

Psalm 51. It is the prayer of repentance. No doubt I'm going to insult your intelligence with Bible knowledge, but you know this is about the story when David, and the Bible says about when in springtime the kings go out to war David decided to send his commander to the battle – the battle that he was supposed to be fighting. In the middle of the day, he walks up, in his veranda so to speak, and he looks out and he sees a beautiful woman, Bathsheba. He takes a fancy to himself. The result is the murder of a friend and the husband, and the death of a child, through this unholy unholy. Side note: if God has called you to do something, if God has placed it in your heart and if God has placed a calling upon your life, don't send somebody else to fight your battle – you fight your battle because, let me tell you, unless you do, you are preparing yourself to meet some Bathshebas along the way. Amen? That's just a side note. You stay in the calling that God has called you to do, and you obey him in what he has to obliged you to do.

At this point I just need to break. I just sense the Lord say: he is raising up a new generation. (I'm getting very emotional today, I don't know why.) He is raising up a new generation, a people that was not be offended at his name, a people that will declare his glory and his goodness on this earth. There's a new generation to God is arising. O God, we pray, let us be that generation. Lord let us be the generation that you would usher. Father God, this new revival and awakening that you are bringing upon this earth. Father, let us be the ones, we ask it in Jesus' name.

So there is David. This is the man that God says “I have found David a man after my own heart.” Now that gives me (I'm giving you a little bit of side notes here) great hope – it really does because when God called out David, when God sought David, this is what he said: “I have found David a man after my own heart.” Now this is before David had even had his ups and down, this was before David had known Bathsheba. God in his wisdom, God in his omniscience, knew that David was going to fail, he knew that David was going to commit adultery, he knew that David was going to be disobedient in the numbering of the soldiers (if you remember the counting) – he knew all of this, yet God says “I have found David, a man after my own heart.”

Now, that fills me with hope because that speaks of the grace and the mercy of God, because if God could show mercy and hope to David, I'm telling you brother and sister, he can show mercy and hope to you today. I don't care what you have done, I don't care where you have been, if you will confess your sin, he will extend his mercy and his grace towards you. Amen?

So here we are, David a man after God's own heart, and here he is – commits sin with Bathsheba. So in the how, how did he cultivate this heart?

Number 1 that the Lord has shown me is repentance, an attitude of repentance: a heart that is repentant before God. Repentance is not just a one-off thing, repentance is a daily walk before the Lord. Some of us, we think that we can get away with our sinfulness, some of us think we can get away with our secret little sins. This was David's attitude – there he was, he committed adultery with Bathsheba, a child was conceived, through that he murders his friend, he takes Bathsheba (to cover the sin) as his wife. So David is walking round his palace and everything is good with life. His kingship is still established, his kingdom is peaceful (still ok) – everything is good. Everything just looks good, until God sends him Nathan. And then Nathan says, “You are the man who sinned against God.” (I'm just paraphrasing everything, you can read it for yourself II Samuel 11.) Until Nathan points to the thing that was standing between him and God. And I love David for this because you see the transparency of a man, you see the transparency of his heart, you see the transparency of his repentant heart but you also, in psalm 145, see the transparency

of a heart that is overflowing with praise and worship unashamedly. But here you see a man that doesn't excuse his sin, doesn't wash it, doesn't justify it, doesn't reason it – he gets before the Lord, and he says “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving kindness, according to the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.”

Brothers and sisters, if you are in a similar situation today – I'm not here to judge, I'm not here to condemn anybody – but if there are sins in your life that you think, secret sins that you think you're getting away with me, believe you me: you won't get away with it because sooner or later you will confess it up of the Lord is going to expose it. Now if I was in your shoes – in my shoes I speak of myself – I'd rather confess it to the Lord, because to expose it publicly is rather a shameful thing. So you bring it before the Lord. Don't wait until he exposes it. So David gets before the Lord and so one of the ways to get to that place of worship, one of the ways to get into that secret place with the Lord where we know his presence, where we know his glory, is an attitude of heart that maintains an attitude of repentance before the Lord. That means we don't excuse our sinfulness, we don't excuse our little sins; we deal with them, we get rid of them and we bring it under the blood of Jesus. If you confess your sin he is faithful and just to forgive you of all your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. In the same way that he forgave David, he will forgive you.

Now, just a little side note: have you ever wondered why, why O why, was David not dragged out with Bathsheba and stoned to death? I just leave that as a side note. Think about it: he's broken the law of God. Leviticus 20[:10] says the man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Ok, so secondly. Secondly (I'm not going to dwell on that). Secondly, the verse that caught my attention was this. Second point is this: “a heart that is desirous of God, a heart that covets the presence of God.” And verse 10 and 11 it says “Create in me a clean heart, O God, a new and steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.”

Just quickly a side note: it was right for David to pray that because in this time the Holy Spirit would come upon him and leave. It's not really a prayer that we can pray today as Christians. I've been in some circles and in prayer meetings where a brother has confessed something, he goes “O Lord don't take your Spirit away from me,” and I said “Well, it sounds really nice, it sounds really religious, but you're being unscriptural,” and if you don't believe me go to John 14[:16] – it says that he will pray to the Father and he will give us another comforter who will remain with us forever, who will be in you. “I will never leave you, I will never forsake you.” So “take your Spirit away from us” is a non-prayer for us today as New Testament Christians.

But anyway, so, David is crying out before God. David knew about Samson (to talk about your preach). He knew about Samson, he knew about when God, the Holy Spirit left Samson that Samson became a weak man like any other, and was bound by the consequences of his sin. He knew about Saul – indeed he was at the end of Saul's anger and murderous thoughts. He knew about Saul and when the Lord left Saul and how Saul plunged into a place of darkness, depression, anxiety, paranoia, anger, murderous thoughts – indeed he tried to kill David. He saw what it was for a man to be without the Spirit of God. Most pitiful in this world is the man and the woman that hasn't got God in their heart, because they are in the world without hope and without God – they are the most pitiable. So David understood what it was not to have God, not to have the Spirit of God in his life, because after all, it was by the spirit of God that he was anointed, it was by

the Spirit of God that he was made king.

And so David valued, he craved the presence of God. In other words David is saying "God, you can take away my kingship, you can take away my kingdom, you can take away anything that is earthly mine, but please don't take your Spirit from me." What was that? He had a heart, he valued above everything else the presence of the living God in his life.

What sort of Christian should we be? We should emulate David. We too should cry "Lord, in the name of Jesus, we want more and more of you." Actually that's wrong! "Lord take more and more of me that may be lost in you." We are so bound by the world – we are not of this world, we are of another place. We need to get this in our minds. These things are temporary.

And so number 2 is that he had a heart that absolutely desired the presence of God in his life; in fact valued it above any earthly thing.

Number 3. Psalm 145: "I will exalt you my God, O king." Humility. "I will exalt you my God, O king." What is David saying? David's saying "Lord, I know that I am King. You've given me an earthly kingdom, but I declare you as my King, I'll bow down before you as my King. In fact I declare you the King of kings." (Where do we see that? We see that in Revelations: Jesus is the King of kings.) That's humility. It doesn't matter what position you are, it doesn't matter where you are in life, what hierarchy you are, you are to recognise that there is another King above you, and that is Jesus Christ who is your King. So humility.

Number 4. Just love God. It's as simple as that. He loved God with all of his being, and he says "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion." He had much to sing about because he was much forgiven. In the story of Jesus Christ when they asked him, when Jesus was giving the parable: there was a man that was owed 50 shekels (I think it was), and another 500 shekels, and they were both forgiven, and the Lord asks who will love more? (I think that's how it goes.) And they answered, rightly, to whom much was forgiven.

David knew about the mercy of God, he knew that he had be forgiven, he knew he'd been given a second chance, and out of that sprang a heart of worship and a heart of praise. And I think as Christians today, in the worship today (I loved the worship today...not that I haven't loved it any other times) there was just freedom. And there is a sense where I'm hoping that I can stir you up to a place of worship and praise. There is a sense where really when we come into the presence of God, when we come into the house of God, dignity has to stay outside. It is dignity that stands in our way. Don't be afraid to jump, don't be afraid to lift up your hands. Amen? Because worship is not just so much about words as well – it is about words, it is about what we sing – but it's also about the attitude of the body.

Have you noticed in the Bible: they knelt, they sang, they raised their hands, they clapped. I don't know about you, but psalm 150's an almighty going up to heaven. And we're to be like that: we're to be excited, we're to be in euphoria when we think about the Lord God. And he says "I will exalt you, and I will praise you. Forever I will bless your name". Notice he says "forever". It's not just the now, it is a future thing; that word means "for aeons", as in eternity. That means what he starts now is what he's going to carry on into eternity. You may as well start developing an attitude of worship and praise because that's what you're going to be doing as you get into eternity. In fact, the older we get the more we should increase in our praise, the more desirous we should be of praising. The older we get because we're closer to the Pearly Gates. We should be more excited the older we get about singing and exalting the name of God, because he is worthy – he really is worthy.

Just look at you; look at you: you are working miracles. Bet you've never thought about it that way, but you are working miracles created in Christ Jesus for good works, you are created in his image. My goodness gracious! You walk in the beauty of Christ, you are working miracles! He did for you what no man could do for you – no one except him. He gave you new life: you who are dead in sins and trespasses, he has now made alive. You're alive. Praising because you're alive. When I say alive, I don't mean alive in the body. You are forever alive. You were dead once, you are now forever alive. It is a now thing, it's a future thing: you're forever alive. So for that alone we should worship and praise him, praise his Holy name. If you want to know how much he loves you, you just need to look at the cross. If you want to know how much you should worship him, look at the cross. Because that's where he shed his blood. I heard it said once if he gave it all for me, then I owe him all of me. And there's a lot of truth in that. If you really want to know why you should worship him, if you have no other reason (I find that impossible but if you don't) just think and look at the cross – a perfect work. Absolutely perfect work. Amen.

I think we're at the end; I had much more to say but never mind. Heavenly Father we thank you. Can we just close our eyes?

Father, I'm here with my brothers and sisters who are your sons and daughters. Lord we simply say that we love you. That Lord, I know there are people here and you may be going through the motions, maybe have been a bit distant from the Lord and you've been going through that kind of religious performance, and in some ways your heart has been distant from the Lord for a while, and you know that in your heart you're not right with the Lord. If that is you, I'd like you to put your hand up – I'm not here to shame, I'm not here to condemn you, and I want to pray for you. Does anybody here also doesn't know the Lord Jesus Christ? You may have been born into the church, grandmother, granddad were Christians, mum and dad were Christians, and you just kind of strolled along and you just came to church, and here you are today, and somehow in your heart you think "Well, I'm a Christian because my dad and my mum; because after all I was born in the church" – that doesn't make you a Christian. If you have never personally invited the Lord Jesus Christ into your heart as your Lord and Saviour, and you've heard this for the first time (I doubt there are many here who have heard it for the first time), please put your hand up – I'd like to pray for you.

Does any of you that later want a bit more prayer because you got sickness and illness in your body, or for any other prayer, I have bought anointing oil with me today, 'cause James 5:12 tells us if there's any men, any of you sick, let him call the Elders of the church. Anointing with oil and the prayer of faith shall heal them. So there's nothing magical about the oil – it's just a symbol of the Holy Spirit – but we do it out of faithfulness to the Lord because he's commanded us to do it. So if you want to, at the end of the service, come to the corner over here to the left and you want prayer, and you want to be anointed with oil for the healing of your body – I can't heal anybody, let me stress that – and this is not a question of your faith. Not questioning your faith, we're just simply obeying the word of God and it is up to the Lord what he does, but we're going to ask, and we're going to believe together with you as a church, that as we pray the Holy Spirit will do and bring healing to your bodies. Amen?

So, Father God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank God for the Lord for the closure of this service, we thank you Lord for the years that've heard that hearts, Father God, that have perceived and understood. I pray, Lord God, for the seeds that have been sown would germinate deep into our hearts, Lord, that as we leave this place, Lord, we would be known as those that worship and praise God. Lord I just pray your blessing of protection upon my brothers and sisters,

Lord. I pray that as they go through their week, Father God, in whatever field they're in, Lord, that you would be with them, that you use them in those places, Father God, to bring glory and praise to your name. We thank you. I pray for the peace and stability of their homes in Jesus name, Amen.

If you would like prayer, please email us using prayer@woodsidechurch.org.uk