

Let's take our Bibles and turn to Colossians chapter 3, verse 16. I wanna begin a two part sermon this morning called Join The Song. If you're with us, we're in the middle of a series called Total Grace. And we've been looking at the gem of God's grace, and the different facets to God's gracious work in each of our lives. And we've looked at saving grace in Ephesians 2, we've looked at strengthening grace in Hebrews 4, we've looked at serving grace in Romans 12, we've looked at speaking grace in Colossians 4, and this morning we're going to begin to look at singing grace.

God gives us grace to sing. We sing of grace because of grace. And so let's stand in honor of God's word. I'm gonna break in at verse 12, give you the context of verse 16. But we're looking at Colossians 3, verse 16, where Paul tells us to sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. Colossians 3:12. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long suffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another.

If anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body, and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the father through him. You may be seated.

I wanna begin this morning by presenting you with a spiritual truism. Here's what it is. When someone finds Christ, they along with Christ, find their voice. When someone finds Christ, they along with Christ, find their voice. They automatically become a loudmouth for the gospel. You can see that at salvation. At salvation, they find their voice, because Romans 10, verse 9 tells us that we're not only to believe with our hearts, we're to confess with our minds that Jesus is Lord.

So at salvation, they find their voice in confession, and after salvation, they find their voice in celebration. As they come to understand the magnitude of God's mercy, the breadth and depth of God's work in their life, the promise of heaven, that Christian begins to worship God and praise God. At salvation, they find their voice in confession, but after salvation, they find their voice in celebration, in worship and in praise.

Psalms 118, verse 14 says, "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation." Anyone that has experienced salvation will sing, will worship, will praise. When a man or a woman experiences the grace of God, they not only want to talk about it, they want to sing about it. Doesn't David tell us that in Psalm 40, verse 3? Having spoken about how God redeemed his life? He says that God has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God. Listen, I want you to think about this.

God is too great, his love is too wonderful, and his grace is too amazing for you and I simply to talk about it. Now we love to talk about it. We love to share the gospel. We love to tell people our testimony of God's saving grace, and God's keeping power. But we also realize talking about it is not enough. We wanna sing about it. We wanna worship God. We want to extol his love and his mercy, and his grace. That's why wherever you find Christians. You'll find singing. Read church history, and you'll realize in the early Methodist movement, you could tell a Methodist home in the community because singing was heard from it.

Wherever you find Christians, you'll find singing. Because according to the Psalm of Psalm 34, verse 3, "Let us exalt his name together." It's natural that we move from experiencing God's salvation to expressing our love for him in song. Because as C.S. Lewis says, "We tend to praise that which we enjoy." If you read C.S. Lewis in his book *Reflections on the Psalms*, he says something very profound. "I think we delight to praise what we enjoy, because the praise not only merely expresses, but completes the enjoyment." It's his appointed consummation.

When you enjoy something so much, you tend to praise it. You tend to move from just talking about it to praising it. In fact, he goes on to kind of explain his thought, "The world rings with praise. Lovers praise their mistresses. Readers, their favorite poet. Walkers praise the country side. Players praise their favorite game. Praise of weather, wines, actors, motors. Horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars.

Except where intolerably adverse circumstances interfere, praise almost seems to be inner health, made audible. I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it. Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that's magnificent? The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise God, are doing what all men do when they speak of that which they care about.

C.S. Lewis is helping us understand the phenomena of Christian worship, praise, and singing. And you understand that by understanding, that when our eyes are open to the beauty of God's character, to the everlasting nature of God's love, to the price attached to it in the sending of his son. When we see how amazing his grace is, how wonderful his love is, it's only natural that we will praise that which we enjoy. And not only that we'll ask others to come along for the ride.

Come let us exalt his name together. So what's my point? By way of introduction, it's pretty simple. When you find Christ, you find your voice. When you become a Christian, you become a loudmouth for the gospel. You like to talk about it, but then you realize talking about it's not enough. You like to sing about it. Now admittedly, let's get this out of the way, we're all meant to sing. That's what God has called us to do.

But some of us are good at it, and some of us are not so good at it. As I heard my pastor say once back in Northern Ireland, when it comes to a congregation, there are nightingales and there gales in the night. And given that reality, here's what I would suggest we've all got to sing, every single one of us. In tune, out of tune. We've all gotta sing, but given the fact that some of us are out of tune rather than in tune, some of us only should sing with a microphone, amen?

Fact, Gary Peterson, one of our men who's involved in our prison ministry, told me a story one day. He was over in Chino Hills sharing the gospel with some of the inmates, and during the service, he was up front, in front of the microphone and the stand, and he got into a kind of zone, and as they were singing, he had his eyes closed, his hands up. And after he had finished kind of that moment, he opened his eyes, and the microphone was 10 feet away. Some prisoner had got up and actually moved the thing 10 feet away.

Now you could conclude that that's a prank. I think it was Gary, sing but don't sing with a microphone. 'Cause only some of us can sing with a microphone. But we've all got to sing. He has put a new song in

our mouths, even praise unto our God. God is our strength, and God is our song, and God has become our salvation. So, I wanna help you and me sing better, if not sweeter. And so I wanna turn to Colossians chapter 3 and verse 16, which we're gonna look at this morning and next Sunday morning.

What I want you to see, this text we're about to look at, I'll read it here. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord. I want you to understand, that what we have in this simple verse is a rare window, a rare peak into the worship experience of the New Testament church. What we have here is a worship update. On how those early believers worshiped God.

Now for the purpose of our series, I want you to see that here we have singing grace. We have set out to understand that grace not only meets us at the beginning of our Christian life, it's there in the middle, and it will be there at the end, and we'll expense more of it beyond the end. It's all grace. It's total grace. There's saving grace, Ephesians 2:1-10, there's strengthening grace, Hebrews 4, there's speaking grace, Colossians 4, there's serving grace, Romans 12, and here you have singing grace.

When the grace of God touches a man's life. When the grace of God transforms a woman's heart. Singing is the result. The Christian is a person who sings with grace in their heart. Now you may have a translation, actually, that renders that singing with thanks in your heart to the Lord. But I think the New King James has got it right. Because although it's not to be seen in our English version, in the Greek text, there's a definite article associated with the word Charis, or Grace.

So Paul is saying, "Sing with the grace that's in your hearts to the Lord." Grace is the context out of which our praise ascends to God. Our inner experience of grace manifests itself in song. We sing of grace because of grace. We delight in the grace of God, and songs bubble to the surface of our hearts. Now, before we look at the text, let's put it quickly in it's context. That's why I read from verse 12 to 17.

Because in this section of Paul's letter to the Colossians, he's dealing with the conduct of the new man in Christ. Because if any man's in Christ, he's a new creature. Trust in Christ leads to transformation in Christ. And what you have in this passage, in fact beginning at the early parts of Chapter 3, is a contrast between the old life before we became a Christian, and the new life now that we are a Christian. And the changes that should happen in the life of those who have embraced the gospel.

You can see in verse six, that he talks about their life prior to their coming to Jesus Christ. When indeed they were sons of disobedience. And they walked and conducted themselves after fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, covetousness, and idolatry. But notice verse 8, "But now, you yourselves are to put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another." Verse 10, "And put on the new man, who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of him who created him."

When you and I put our faith in Jesus Christ, we're given a new nature. We're given new affections. God reorients our lives where we begin to pursue righteousness and follow Jesus Christ. And we put off that old behavior, and we put on this new behavior. Not in self will, but by the spirit of God. Look at verse 12, "Therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies."

Paul takes the image of someone changing their clothes. You can imagine a man coming in from the factory where he's worked among dirt and grime, and his clothes are filthy. We've got images perhaps of

the old days, and the coal miner's coming home. And they put off that dirty overall, and they got showered, and put on some clean clothes. And Paul's kind of taking that image, and he's saying, "You know what? You put off that dirty behavior. That behavior that indeed was against God's will and God's word." And now that you're a Christian, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and through the instruction of God's word, here's the kind of behavior you need to put on.

This is the before and after pictures of the Christian life. I had an old past back in Northern Ireland who used to say, "If there's no change, there's something strange." If someone tells you they're a follower of Jesus Christ, but they go on living in sexual sin, they go on behaving in a manner outside the will of God, they go on deliberately disobeying the law of God, and the teachings of Jesus Christ, they're not a Christian.

'Cause Christians put off vice, and they put on virtue. Not perfectly, but progressively, and permanently. And so that's where we're at in the text. See, Christ forgives people, but he fixes people. He forgives you your sin, and then he starts to give you an ability through the spirit of God not to repeat that sin. He not only forgives, he fixes.

And so alongside these virtues of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness and love, Paul then says in verse 15, "Put on or let the peace of God umpire, your hearts and alongside that, our text, let the word of Christ dwell in your hearts richly." And as the word of Christ dwells in a Christian's heart richly, it produces in them a song, where they sing to one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. Singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord.

Psalms 119, verse 54 says, your statutes have become my song. See, as you and I study the Bible, and the word of God does its work in our lives, it produces worship. We move from the word to worship. That's where we're at in our text. So, let's come and look at the text. Three things, just one this morning, and two next Sunday morning. If you're looking an outline, we're gonna see in this text, regarding the grace of singing or singing with grace. We're gonna see singing and the scriptures. We're gonna see singing and the saints. And we're gonna see singing and the Savior.

But here's the first part, singing and the scriptures. There's a correlation between us singing and worshiping God, and an intake of God's word. Your statutes have become my song. Look at the text. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another. Let's look at this phrase, the word of Christ.

Now in its narrow and historic interpretation, we may wanna limit this to the writings of the apostles and the gospels, where they write down and record the things that Jesus said and did. Jesus told them, didn't He? In the upper room discourse, John 14:26 and John 16, verse 13, that the spirit of God would help them write down an accurate record of Jesus life, death and resurrection.

That's a narrow interpretation. I think there's a broader interpretation that doesn't do injustice to that thought, but just widens it and broadens it. And it's the idea that this phrase, the word of Christ, embraces the whole of the Bible. The whole of the Bible. I like what Derrick Tidball says in his commentary on Colossians, he says this. "The word of Christ refers to the teaching of Christ, which we have recorded for us in the gospels. But a full understanding of the teaching of Christ can only be obtained by reading the gospels in the context of the old testament, which leads up to them. And the rest of the New Testament, which leads away from them."

In other words, this is shorthand for speaking about the whole of the Bible, with a special emphasis on the words of Jesus living in us. See the Old Testament leads up to the gospels, and the book of Acts and the epistles, and the Revelation, they flow out of the gospel. So I think, when we read here about the word of Christ, we're dealing with the whole of the Bible in relation to the message of God's love in Jesus Christ. I've said it before, in the Old Testament, he is coming.

In the gospels, and in Acts, he has come. In the epistles, in Jude, and in the Revelation, he's coming again. The Bible is a hymn book. It's an HIM book. It's about Him. In fact, didn't Jesus reiterate this on the road to Emmaus when a couple of his disciples are at a loss to understand the seeming loss of Jesus Christ by death on a cross? And Jesus comes to them, he opens their eyes, he talks with them along that road. And he helps them understand that this needed to happen.

And in Luke 24:25-27 you've got those well worn and well known words. And beginning at Moses, that's the Pentateuch, and the Psalms, and the prophets. He spoke of those things concerning himself. And how he needed to suffer. In John 5:39, he talks about the scriptures, and how they speak of him. When Paul writes to young Timothy in 2 Timothy 3, verse 15, he talks about how he has known the scriptures from when he was a child, which has been able to make him wise unto salvation. Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is the scriptures Timothy heard. And those Old Testament scriptures had the gospel in them.

So the word of Christ here, in a narrow sense, speaks of the words of Christ recorded in scripture. But I think in a broader sense, it's the whole of the Bible. The Old Testament leads up to the gospels, and then the epistles, and the Revelation come out of the gospels. Let's look at this other phrase, dwell in you richly, as we're just trying to get our heads and hands around the text. Let the word of Christ, let the word of God, let the Bible, let the scriptures dwell in you richly in all wisdom. Literally, let the word of God take up residence in your life.

This word dwell is a domestic word, it means to make a home. To settle down. And so this is what we're being told here. Let the word of God, through the preaching of that text, take residence in your heart. May the scriptures find a ready made home in your heart. It speaks about the fact that a Christian is someone who's always hospitable to the word.

Meet a Christian, and you'll meet a person who wants the Bible. Who wants to sit under preaching, who wants to sit down themselves and study it for themselves. Who likes to be in a group of Christians discussing the text of scripture. Because a Christian is someone whose heart is hospitable to the word of God preached, and taught. That's what is being taught here. Fact, that's echoed, isn't it? In 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1, in verse 5, in 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 13, as Paul describes how the gospel took root in the city of Thessalonica, in Greece.

He says this in verse 5, "For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy spirit, and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you, for your sake listen, and you became followers of us and the Lord, having received the word in much affliction." In fact, he pays them a great compliment, down in chapter 2, in verse 13. "For this reason, we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you welcomed it."

Not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. And again, this a description of a New Testament Christian. The New Testament Christian, the follower of Jesus Christ, is a man or a woman who welcomes the opportunity to hear the word, and then welcomes the word heard. That word welcome is the same kind of word, not the same word, but the same kind of word that we have in Colossians 3, verse 16. It speaks about welcoming somebody warmly into your home.

And when you're excited about someone coming to your home, either a friend, or a family member, you know they're coming when the bell rings, or the door is wrapped. You open it, and what do you normally, "Come on in. We've been waiting for you, we've been looking forward to this. The kettle's on, sit down. Come on in." That's our word. Paul is saying, "You know what I gives thanks to God for? This cost you. You received this in much affliction, but when you heard the word of God, you welcomed it. You said to God's word, come on, come on, come on in to my life. Sit down, teach me, and transform me.

That's what's going on in this text. Now I wanna turn the text in a particular direction. Because I want you to understand that we are probably, hearing this text as an individual. And right now, you and I are thinking about a chair somewhere in our home. A little cubby hole, maybe where we get alone with the Lord, with our Bible open, and we're pouring over the scriptures, and we're allowing it to speak to us, and it's prompting us to speak to God. That's the image. Personal devotions, and that's a good thing.

But that's not primarily in Paul's mind. Because the word you here is in the plural. Let the word of Christ dwell in you all. If you were from Alabama. Or yousens if you were in Northern Ireland. Let the word of Christ dwell in you all richly. He's speaking to a congregation, and you know what? I think you can tell that by looking at the text again. Let the word of Christ dwell in you, plural, richly in all wisdom, teaching, admonishing, notice one another, there's something collective and corporate going on here. Something congregational that's happening.

In psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your, plural, your hearts to the Lord. So I want you to understand that right now, this text is being addressed to a congregation of people. The picture here is not personal devotion, it is not your quiet time, the picture here is corporate worship in the church, on the Lord's day, with the assembly of the saints.

Where, according to Ephesians 4, in the best of circumstances, among that congregation will stand men gifted to the church by the risen Christ, who are gifted to teach, able to teach. Men who labor in the word and doctrine. And the church assembles to hear those men, and to let that word dwell, take residence in their hearts.

So what we have here is, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. This is a message to listen intently, and receive personally, and live out practically what you hear from gifted teachers in the church. In fact, this text justifies what we're doing right now. This justifies the kind of service that we have here at Kindred. Where we sing, we pray, we fellowship, and we hear the word of God. It's as simple as that.

It's unvarnished, although beautiful. Because preaching dominated the New Testament worship service. I'm convinced of that, and I wanna convince you of that. Look at a few texts, I mean, we have in the book of Acts, a kind a record of how the early church, you know, congregated and rolled. In Acts chapter 2, and in verse 41 and 42, we read of what happened to those who received the word and were

baptized. The 3,000 souls who were added to the church, what did they do? Did they all scatter into their own little corner? No, it says, and they, corporately, together, continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine. That's the preaching of apostolic doctrine.

Because in the text before, Peter had exhorted them, and testified to them in many words. And they received the word. And the people who received the word wanted more of the word, they wanted to welcome it more into their lives, and so they got together, and they continued, and devoted themselves to the apostle's doctrine, to fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers. It's a typical month at Kindred, where we come together, we break bread, we fellowship, we pray, and we devote ourselves to the apostle's doctrine. As the word is proclaimed.

Remember that incident in Acts chapter 6, where, you know, the church has kind of been overrun. It's trying to catch up with the needs that need to be met. The widows fund here has been poorly administered. The apostles are being drawn into a growing controversy. And they say, "Look, it's not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." It's not that that's beneath us, since we follow the One who washed people's feet.

It's not that that's beneath us, it's just that's not the best use of our time, or our talent, so here's what we're gonna do. You guys, you know, get yourself seven men of good reputation, filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom, and appoint them over this business. But notice verse 4, but we ourselves will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Read the New Testament.

Push open the door into a New Testament service, and at the heart of it is the ministry of the word. A devotion to apostolic doctrine. A hearing of the scriptures. In fact, in chapter 6, verse 7, you have one of several summary statements, as Luke tells you, what was the catalytic factor in the growth of the church. And we read in verse seven, then the word of God spread, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem.

It was the word of God proclaimed that produced disciples. One other text would be Acts chapter 10, verse 33. Acts chapter 10, verse 33, I love it, it's the conversion of Cornelius, the Greek. And there was some in his household to come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they asked Peter to come, 'cause they wanna hear more. And in Acts 10, verse 33, so I sent to you, that's Cornelius speaking of Peter. So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come now therefore we are all present before God to hear all the things commanded you by God. Love that.

We're all here, Peter, now start speaking, start teaching what God has commanded. And that's just a sample, read it for yourself. It'll appear everywhere. When you go looking for it, you'll find it. The ministry of the word defined and directed the life of the church. Can I add another argument on top of that? I mean when you read something like first and second Timothy and Titus, which are pastoral manuals for young leaders in the early church, you're gonna see an emphasis on preaching. As their prime recalling and role.

The pastoral office is primarily a teaching office. What did Jesus say to Peter? "Feed my sheep." And when Paul's talking to Timothy, he describes the Christian leader in first Timothy 3:1-6. And the emphasis is on the character of the man. And there's only one emphasis on his ability, and his giftedness, but I want you to see what the emphasis is. In 1 Timothy 3, verse 2, that man who's gonna

have oversight of God's people, must be able to teach. Because the early church service was a teaching service.

What do we read in 1 Timothy 4, verse 13? Timothy give yourself to the public reading of scripture. And alongside that would come an exposition. And by the way, that's a throwback to synagogue worship. I mean look at the gospels, and look at the book of Acts. Jesus goes into the Synagogue in Luke 4, and he opens up the scroll of Isaiah. He reads it, and then he explains that he's the fulfillment of it. Because the reading of the law, and the exposition of the law was part of the synagogue worship service.

In Acts 9, verse 20, you'll read this interesting text about Paul, and what he does in synagogues. Immediately, he preached Christ in the synagogues, plural, that he is the son of God. Paul was given an opportunity to preach in the synagogues, because in the synagogues the word of God was preached. Same in a Christian service. That's why we see that in the book of Acts. That's why when you read about the pastoral office, you see this emphasis on teaching, 1 Timothy 5, verse 17. Those who labor in the word and doctrine are worthy of double honor.

When Paul is signing off saying goodbye, in a second letter to Timothy, 2 Timothy 4, verses 1 to 5, preach the word. I'm just trying to justify what we do. I'm just trying to have you understand that this church is like most protestant churches, where the pulpit is central, this is here, central, because it's conveying a message. The ministry of the word is central. The word leads to worship. It is the word that informs us about God. It's the word of Christ that teaches us the gospel, as we come to understand it, and experience it, and enjoy it, we want to praise that which we enjoy, which starts with being informed through the scriptures. But the word leads to worship, preaching leads to praise, and scripture leads to song. Amen?

That's what we're arguing here. Preaching and teaching God's word was not an intrusion into the worship service of the early church. But rather an indispensable part of it. Isn't there something wrong with us today? Are we not putting ourselves into reverse gear when an evangelical church after evangelical church, we are removing the pulpit. We are shortening the sermon. What is going on with us?

Let the word dwell in you, the congregation, richly in wisdom. And in having heard it, teach one another, and admonish one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. In the New Testament, the worship of God was always a response to the word of God. In the New Testament, worship was a pulpit driven experience. Worship was more about opening your ears, then it was about closing your eyes and raising your hands.

Singing is an echoing of scripture. Preaching was not only a crucial part of worship, it created more worship. I like what Spurgeon says here. "There is no worship of God that is better than the hearing of a sermon. I venture to say that if a sermon be well heard, it puts faith in exercise as you believe it. It puts love in exercise as you enjoy it. It puts gratitude in exercise as you think of all the blessings that God has given you. If the sermon be what it should be, it stirs all the coals of fire in your spirit, and makes them burn with a brighter flame."

That's why our protestant forefathers, and our evangelical fore-brothers believe, that when you came to that point where the word of God was preached, you'd come to the high point of the worship service. In fact, if we, if we have done anything wrong, perhaps we should preach first and sing later. Because it's

the word of Christ dwelling in us richly that produces these songs where we sing about God's grace in our hearts to the Lord.

I like also what David Garland says, and we need to hear it in the melee of worship wars, and the compromise that's going in our churches today, "The worship of the early Christians placed a premium on the spoken word in contrast to perfunctory rituals or mysterious ceremonies." The New Testament service was simple. Unvarnished. It didn't require cathedrals, it didn't require candles, it didn't require vestments, and robes. It didn't require lights to be dimmed, and atmospheres to be created. It needed a man filled by the spirit of God, an appointed leader among the people of God, standing among them, declaring the word of God, and as they listened and responded, and allowed the word of Christ to dwell in them richly, discipleship took place, worship ascended to God, and the gospel spread.

Now for the time that remains, let's go into a practical direction just for a few moments. Because if the word of Christ is to dwell in the congregation richly, in the body of believers richly, expository preaching must be married to expository listening. Communication is a packaged deal. It requires on the one hand, a good speaker, who's compelling, and cogent, and clear, and biblical, and textually true. But it also requires on the other hand, a keen listener, who has come ready like the Bereans, to hear and study the scriptures for themselves.

Not simply to be spoon fed. But to meditate on the scriptures themselves. Communication is a package deal. The Parishoner must be in partnership with the preacher in working hard at listening and learning. There must be a partnership between the pulpit and the pew. I recommended it before, I recommend it again, it's a book called Expository Listening by Ken Ramey. Buy it. You'll be the better for it, and you'll make my job easier.

Here's what he says in this book, Expository Listening. "In order for you to receive the maximum benefit from the sermons you hear, you must partner with the preacher, so that the word of God accomplishes it's intended purpose of transforming your life. Nothing creates a more explosive, electrifying, life changing atmosphere, than when the lightning bolts from a Spirit-empowered preacher hit the lightning rods of a Spirit-illuminated listener." Oh, I like that.

When the lightning bolts of a Spirit filled preacher are met with the lightning rods of a Spirit illuminated listener. That's when God shows up. That's when the spirit of God is felt. That's when a move of God begins. He goes on, "There is no telling the dynamic impact the Spirit of God will make through the Word of God any time someone faithfully explains and applies God's word, comes in contact with someone who faithfully listens to and obeys it."

So I wrote down a few little things, just gonna go through these a bit, like a bit of a checklist to just kinda stir your thinking. Then we'll pick this up next week. We've looked at singing and the scriptures, we'll look at singing and the saints, and singing and the savior. But what about lessons in expository listening? If you wanna be a good expository listener, I think several things are involved.

Number 1, prizing. If you're taking notes, prizing. And I think it all begins with how you view the Bible, and how you value the Bible. If I'm gonna get up and open it, I'm gonna spend 45 or 50 minutes teaching it. If you don't value it, it'll come to nothing. But if you sit with an understanding of the value of the word of God, the treasure that it is, the heart and mind of God revealed to his creation. A telescope on the future. The good news of Jesus Christ.

It will help us make our decisions, by instructing us in righteousness. If you understand all of that, you're gonna be all ears. You're gonna be all in. So it begins with prizing. Doesn't a psalmist say in Psalm 19, verse 10, that the word of God is to be desired more than Gold. That's the value he put on it. Job says, "I esteemed your word more than my necessary food." If you go over to Psalm 119, verse 162, you're gonna read these words. Psalm 119:162, very interesting picture.

"I rejoice at Your word, as one who finds great treasure." The word of God is like gold. This book is gold. You know, we often say that, he's gold, or she's gold. This book is gold. When you and I discover some precious promise, some hope or expectation for the future, some view of the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ in person and work, it's like we've just discovered treasure. In fact, I think it was Warren Wiersbe brings this out, in commenting on Psalm 119, verse 162.

He says this, "In bible days, people sometimes hid their wealth in jars and buried it in the ground. And if a farmer plowing his field suddenly discovered a jar filled with buried gold, he would greatly rejoice. And there are great treasures buried in God's word, and you and I must diligently dig for them as we read meditate and pray. And when we find these treasures, we should rejoice and give thanks. Christ being the greatest treasure."

Do you prize the word of God? Do you prize the preaching of the word of God? Do you realize it's a sacred hour when we sit down together, and we put the week behind us, and we hold off thoughts on the week to come, and the word of God is opened, and God speaks into our lives?" It's the high point of the week. What about Nehemiah 8, verses 5 and 6? Where you have that moment where the water gate, the word of God is preached, and the word of God is read. And there we read, and the people bowed down and worshiped. It was just a sacred moment. A wonderful time when the word of God was opened, and the people realized, this is something special.

Not only prizing, number 2, preparing. Preparing. I love Ezra 7, verse 10. And Ezra prepared, or set his heart to study the law. He set, or he prepared his heart to study the law. Now I'm not sure what that all involved, but for you and I, it involves, you know, preparing our bodies and our minds with a good night's sleep. It means preparing our hearts by sitting down before the word of God ourselves, in a quiet moment, asking God to use the service in our lives in an effective manner.

It means prioritizing the Lord's day. Preparing our week, so that nothing gets in the way of assembling with God's people to hear the word of Christ, preached that it might dwell in your heart richly. I like Revelation 1, verse 10, where we read of John. I know it's got a special implication, but a secondary application. John was in the spirit on the Lord's day. And he heard a voice. Are you in the spirit? You may be in your car on your way to church on the Lord's day, but are you in the spirit, in the car, coming to church?

Ready, eager. Prayed up. Prepared. Prizing, preparing, purging. You wanna be a good expository listener? Then get rid of those things in your life, or in your thinking that get in the way of God's word. What about James 1, verse 21. James 1, verse 21, "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls." He's speaking to believers. This is sanctification. The saving of their souls is the continual saving that comes after justification. And that's going to require the receiving of the word of God. And to receive it, you've got to lay aside those things that get in the way of the spirit's work through the word.

Interesting, the word filthiness here, is a Greek word that can carry the idea of earwax. I will not get into that deeply. But, that's the idea. Sins can be like earwax. Wrong attitudes, wrong behavior. Watching the wrong thing on a Saturday night, before the Lord's day. Doing a wrong thing. It's filthiness. It's like earwax. It's gonna get in the way of you hearing the word of God through the spirit of God, and you've gotta repent of that.

You've gotta purge that. You gotta lay that aside. You gotta be at that place where your heart is open and your motives are sincere to what God wants to do in your life. That's why you need to be thinking through like the psalmists in Psalm 139, Lord search my heart, examine my ways, see if there's any wicked way in me. Pondering, prizing, preparing, purging, pondering. We've not only got to here, but we've got to hear. By meditation, by pondering, by thinking through what we hear.

What does the psalmist say in Psalm 119, verses 15 and 16? "I will meditate on your precepts, and contemplate your ways. I will delight myself in your statutes. I will not forget your word." I mean some of us have forgot it by about 1:25 this afternoon. For me, it might be about 4 o'clock, but for you it's 1:25. You know what it's saying, it's so easy to hear but forget. To receive it, like a child receives instruction from a father or a mother then just throws it away. Shrug of the shoulder.

No. No, you're gonna ponder it. You're gonna contemplate God's way. You love your father, so you receive your instruction. And your father's a king. And you sit under the authority of his word, and you meditate on his counsel. Let's repeat it again, 'cause I wanna read it. Psalm 119:93, "I will never forget your precepts, for by then you have given me life." 97, "Oh, how I love your law, it is my meditation day and night."

Now you hear the sermon for an hour, but you can meditate on it the rest of the week. And you can get a top up at a small group during the week. Or a men's study, or a women's study. And you've got the word of God, and you meditate on it, you ponder it. You roll it over in your mind. You chew on it. Like a hard candy that you roll over your tongue, again, and again, and again. You suck that thing for all it's worth. That's what you do with the word of God.

When I was a young Christian, I used to take little cards, index cards, and I worked at a assembly line in an aircraft company, and I'd take one of those in every day, and put it in my overall pocket. And every 30 or 40 minutes, I'd bring it out. And let the word of God wash me in the midst of the filth I was hearing and seeing. Pornographic pictures on the walls, guys lockers, the filthy language that was going. I needed the word of God to keep cleansing me. I needed to meditate on it day and night. Pondering it. Meditating on it.

You know, the word of God is useful for 4 things. I know time's gone. Let me just squeeze this in. For doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Therefore, as you mull over scripture, ask yourself, what did I learn, doctrine. Where have I failed, reproof. How can I fix it, correction. How can I make this change stick, instruction in righteousness.

Prizing, preparing, purging, pondering. There's two others, I'm just gonna throw them your way. Praying, and presenting. Praying. Pray for the preacher, that he'll be true to the text, filled by the spirit, able to communicate God's word clearly, and confidently. Isn't that what Paul prays for the Colossians to pray for, in Colossians 4:3-4? And then pray for yourself, that God will give you the grace to receive it, and do

the hard work of obeying it. Psalm 119, verses 17 to 18. Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things from out of your law.

And then there's a presenting. That's a presenting of yourself. That's an arriving at the text, and the sermon, with this attitude. Whatever I hear, I'm going to obey. If it rebukes me, I'm going to embrace it. If it corrects me, I'm going to take it. And whatever change it points out, I'm going to do it. That's back to Acts 10, verse 33. Where Cornelius says to Peter, "We're all here. Now speak to us what God has command." It's like they turned up on the parade ground as soldiers, standing to attention, ready to receive the commandments of the commanding officer. That's what we do on a Sunday morning.

Finish with this. There's a story of three friends, a lawyer, and a doctor, and a pastor who are out deer hunting. And as they go through the woods, a large buck springs out from behind the foliage. For a moment they're startled, they freeze, but all together, they raise their weapons and fire simultaneously. And the buck drops to the ground. And then a heated debate ensues as to who shot the buck. Who can claim the prize.

And in middle of this heated debate, a game warden arrives and asked them what the commotion's about, and the lawyer tells him, "Well, you know what? This buck just jumped out in front us, kinda caught us by surprise. For a moment we were startled, but then we all raised our weapons, we shot at the same time, and we're not sure who killed it." He says, "Let me examine the buck and I'll try and help." And after a few moments, he turns to them, and he said, "I'm pretty sure the preacher shot the buck." The lawyer says, "What makes you think that?" He says, "Well, it's pretty easy, the bullet went in one ear and out the other."

Well, that's the preacher's lot, often. He does all this work, and the people don't do their work, it goes in one ear and out the other. You've got this Bible bullet going in one ear and out the other. Well, let's work at making sure that doesn't happen here. Let allow. Make it the case that the Bible takes up residence in your heart. That you're the kinda Christian that's hospitable to the word. Have those kind of services where God is worshiped as his word is preached. And as his word is preached, and the word is dwelling in hearts richly, you'll find that you will praise that which you enjoy. And you will call others to enjoy it with you. Therefore, let us exalt his name together.

Lord, we thank you for our time in the word this morning. We thank you for these sacred times that we get to enjoy every Lord's day, where we meet in freedom, to hear the word of God preached, and the gospel proclaimed. And it's life changing. We come to revel in your grace and amazed at your love, and can hardly take in all that you've yet to do in our lives. Lord, we gladly worship you. And so we pray as a congregation that we would forever be marked by expository preaching, and expository listening. We're not here to worship the Bible. We're here to hear the Bible, that we might worship the God who's revealed in the Bible. We pray for a sweet work of your spirit, who will take his word and show us Christ. And show us the powers of righteousness for his namesake. We pray and ask these things in Jesus name, amen.