

In God's Household

The Sovereign LORD declares—he who gathers the exiles of Israel: “I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered” (Isaiah 56:8).

Scripture: Isaiah 56:1-8

Song: “The Family of God”

A family in our church waited to adopt an Ethiopian baby. After 18 long months, they finally welcomed Sebastian into their home. Once a stranger, now a son, the child had all the rights and privileges of a biological child.

Imagine God's joy when He announced the invitation for those from every tribe and nation to join His spiritual household. We can rest assured that God's covenant promise of grace extends to all who will come to Him, turn from their sin, and trust in Him alone for salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:12-20). We can know we are accepted in Him and can quiet our fears with God's good promise, a sure hope.

No longer strangers, in God's house we are granted all the rights and privileges of sons and daughters. There are no cultural or ethnic limits as to who can be welcomed into God's family to love and serve Him—now and ultimately in His literal presence for all eternity.

Father, thank You that Your invitation is open to all who will come to You through Jesus. I am forever grateful that You drew me into Your family. Help me rest in the knowledge that I am Your child, fully loved, fully accepted, and fully forgiven. Help me faithfully love and serve You today. In Jesus' name, amen.

.....
June 28–July 4. **Eileen Rife** and her husband travel to serve alongside their missionary children and grandchildren.

Life That Never Grows Old

“Praise be to the LORD who this day has not left you [Naomi] without a guardian-redeemer. . . . He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age” (Ruth 4:14-15).

Scripture: Ruth 4:3-6, 13-15

Song: “Love Found a Way”

The nursing home resident stared out the window. A sparkle appeared when she talked about her new grandson. A moment of comfort and hope broke through the bitter bite of old age.

Naomi, too, felt this bitter bite. Bereft of husband and sons while in Moab, she'd returned to Judah a broken and withered woman. Where was the hope of a child who would carry on the family line? But God, in His faithfulness, provided a guardian-redeemer in Boaz, her Jewish relative willing to marry her Gentile daughter-in-law, Ruth. And their baby son, Obed, brought new life into Naomi's soul.

Then Obed grandfathered David in the ancestral line leading to the Messiah, Jesus Christ our Savior, who restores life for us and sustains us even through our graying years and on into glory, if we choose to trust Him. Jesus took the bitter bite of sin and death and then rose again to breathe new life into our shriveled souls. Although we dwell in earthly bodies that will someday die, in Christ we can enjoy everlasting life that will never grow old.

Father, thank You for sending Jesus, my Redeemer, the one who took my sin and sorrow upon himself so that I could enjoy new life in Him. In Jesus' name, amen.

Beyond Skin Deep

“The priest is to examine the sore on the skin, and if . . . the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is a defiling skin disease. When the priest examines that person, he shall pronounce them ceremonially unclean” (Leviticus 13:3).

Scripture: Leviticus 13:1-8

Song: “Cleanse Me”

For years, Dr. Paul Brand, a Christian orthopedic surgeon, served leprosy sufferers in India by correcting their deformed hands and feet with reconstructive surgery. When other doctors refused, he willingly exposed himself to the infectious disease in order to treat his patients.

In a similar way, the Old Testament priest exposed himself to an infectious disease in order to meet God’s righteous requirement for the person’s cleansing. The priest alone could pronounce him clean according to the specified treatment. Here God provides an illustration of the deep severity of sin’s effects that only a mediator can resolve, for only a clean person can approach a holy God.

Christ, our high priest, not only exposed himself to our sin, but He also carried our sin in His own body on the cross so that we could be healed (Hebrews 9:15; 1 Peter 2:24). Only Christ could meet God’s holy requirement for our soul’s cleansing and present us completely pure before God.

Father, thank You that Jesus Christ, my high priest, stepped in and provided cleansing from my sin. I am forever grateful that because of Christ I have received healing in my soul and stand completely pure in Your eyes. Please help me live out this purity in my thoughts, attitudes, and actions today so that I may glorify You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Share God's Riches

[The men with leprosy] said to each other, “. . . This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves” (2 Kings 7:9).

Scripture: 2 Kings 7:3-11

Song: “Go and Tell Them”

In 1855, Alonzo Delano had already made plans to sell personal property to help his bank customers during a financial crisis. Then a fire destroyed 300 buildings in the town. Alonzo didn't hoard his resources but instead walked through the ravaged area declaring that the bank was open and ready to help.

The four leprosy sufferers in today's Scripture who trudged into an empty enemy camp and found a wealth of gold, silver, clothes, and food. They didn't realize the Lord had worked on their behalf, but they did repent of hiding the spoils and chose to share the good news with the king's court so that others could benefit too.

In Christ, God has lavished on us the riches of His grace, providing every spiritual blessing—forgiveness, adoption as children of God, and the Holy Spirit living within us. Our riches, our conquering weapons in enemy territory, are spiritual. These have the sure promise of a heavenly home where the spoils overflow, the victory is complete, and the true treasure is Christ himself. This is indeed good news to share!

Father, thank You that in Christ You have poured out Your grace on me. You've forgiven all my sin, adopted me into Your forever family, and sealed me with the Holy Spirit—my power for living and Your promise of a future with You in Heaven. Share Your goodness through me today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Come and See

[The Samaritans] said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world” (John 4:42).

Scripture: John 4:39-42

Song: “Come to the Savior”

When friends handed my husband and me a travel brochure about Maui, we wondered if the promise of paradise the pictures portrayed could be legit. Others told us about the Hawaiian island, but we had to go and experience the beauty and wonder for ourselves to know the reality of the lush greens, vibrant colors, and balmy breezes.

After her compelling encounter with Jesus, in her newfound joy and wonder, the Samaritan woman ran to tell her fellow Samaritans about the Messiah. However, they didn't experience Him for themselves until they actually met Him, soaked in His words, and believed in Him.

How wonderful when others tell us about Jesus! But He doesn't become our own until we experience Him in a personal encounter and receive Him as our Savior. Then we understand firsthand that He really is who others have told us He is. Our sins are forgiven, we enjoy the promise of everlasting life with Him, and we long to share Him with others.

Father, thank You for the people in my life who have told me about Jesus. Thank You for prompting me to search out His truth claims for myself and come to know that He is not only the Savior of the world, but my Savior. Today help me share with someone what Jesus has done for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Faith for Forgiving

“If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you” (Luke 17:6).

Scripture: Luke 17:1-10

Song: “Faith Is the Victory”

A real-estate owner tried to collect back rent from previous renters who had said they would pay but had never followed through. At last, the investor wrote a letter releasing them by forgiving the debt, trusting God for his finances.

Forgiveness is a fundamental practice of the believer, which requires faith in God. We represent Christ when we forgive and trust God to take care of us. With Christ’s strength, we uproot that anger and bitterness before it grows deep within. We do not seek revenge.

We can act on even the smallest measure of faith, believing that since God in Christ has forgiven us, we can be like Him and forgive those who do wrong to us. We can trust that God keeps good records and will deal with unrighteousness in His time and in His way. We don’t have to, nor should we. Choosing to forgive is our reasonable service toward God and others, given the price Christ paid to forgive our sins.

Father, You say that even with a small measure of faith, I can choose to forgive as You, through Jesus, have forgiven me. Even though I feel angry over what happened, I forgive _____ (an offender) and commit the people involved into Your safekeeping, entrusting my life and my feelings to You. In my choice to obey, I choose to forgive. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Give Thanks!

[The healed man] threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan (Luke 17:16).

Scripture: Leviticus 13:45-46; Luke 17:11-19

Song: “Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart”

John Kralik felt a nudge to begin writing thank-you notes to business clients and other people in his life. In the process he realized he was noticing people more and found that expressing gratitude changed him.

Jesus responded to the plea for mercy from 10 outcasts, victims of leprosy. All 10 believed and obeyed Jesus' instruction and thus were healed physically even before they reached the priests. However, only one, a Samaritan (and so, twice an outcast!), returned glorifying God and humbly thanking Jesus. Jesus' remark to the man about his decision to come back and the man's deep gratitude for the cure indicate that the man also received the deeper and more lasting spiritual healing of salvation.

When we recognize who Jesus is and what He has done for us to redeem and restore us from the brokenness of our sin, then our responses of confession, faith, and gratitude become all the more reasonable and appropriate. It is reasonable for us to throw ourselves at Jesus' feet in humility and gratitude for His mercy.

Father, thank You for sending Your Son to sacrifice himself for my salvation. Help me to understand the price He paid, and let my gratitude flow all my days on earth and in eternity. Help me rise up and go tell others that they too can be made whole through faith in Christ. In Jesus' name, amen.