

The Writing on the Wall

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[0:00] The scripture reading is from Daniel chapter 5. I'm going to invite one of our congregation, Sheena Innes, to come and to read that passage for us. Shazar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and silver that Nebuchadnezzar, his father, had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.

Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. And the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines drank from them.

They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone. Immediately, the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand, and the king saw the hand as it wrote.

Then the king's colour changed, and his thoughts alarmed him, his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. And then in verse 13.

Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter.

[2:10] But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler of the kingdom.

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let your gifts be for yourself and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation.

O king, the most high God, gave Nebuchadnezzar, your father, kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations and languages trembled and feared before him.

Whom he would, he killed. And whom he would, he kept alive. Whom he would, he raised up. And whom he would, he humbled. But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne and his glory was taken from him.

He was driven from among the children of mankind and his mind was made like that of a beast and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox and his body was wet with the dew of heaven until he knew that the most high God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.

[3:44] And you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this. But you've lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven and vessels of this house, of his house have been brought in before you.

And you and your lords, your wives and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know.

But the God in whose hand is your breath and whose are all your ways you have not honoured. Then from his presence the hand was sent and this writing was inscribed.

And this is the writing that was inscribed. Many, many, tekem and peres. This is the interpretation of the matter. Many, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end.

Tekem, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Peres, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Then Belshazzar gave the command and Daniel was clothed with purple.

[5:01] A chain of gold was put round his neck and a proclamation was made about him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. That very night, Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed.

And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about 62 years old. Amen. May God bless that reading of his word. We're back in the book of Daniel after being away for one week.

And this is a story like they've all been with a lot of drama. And Daniel and his friends, they are Jewish exiles. They were taken from Babylon in 605 B.C. by the king Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar would come back later and destroy Jerusalem in 587. But in this story, we are all the way down to 539 B.C., 66 years later since Daniel went to Babylon.

And Nebuchadnezzar is dead. He died in 562. And this king that we read about, Belshazzar, is the fourth successor to Nebuchadnezzar. So in the passage, verse 22, Daniel refers to Belshazzar as the son of Nebuchadnezzar.

[6:13] But that's just an ancient Near Eastern way of saying successor. He's not related, actually, biologically to Nebuchadnezzar. So three kings have already passed. And here we are with Belshazzar.

He's been ruling for six years. And you remember, if you were here with us, Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a vision, a dream. And he saw this statue of gold and silver and bronze and iron.

And Daniel had told him, Nebuchadnezzar, your kingdom's the gold kingdom. But there's a silver kingdom coming. Your kingdom's going to end. And you will not build this thousand-year empire that you thought and your pride and your glory that you would.

Here's the story. This is when Persia takes the city of Babylon, 539 B.C. And from chapter 4 to chapter 5, that means there's a 23-year gap.

So when you're reading it, remember the Bible was not written with chapters and verse numbers or anything like that. And so when you're reading chapter 4 right into chapter 5, there's a—in between the end of the final word of chapter 4, the first word of chapter 5, 23 years has taken place.

[7:18] But as a reader, of course, you don't experience that when you read it. And that's really important to notice because that's part of the point of the passage. And that's that there's two big literary devices back to early school grammar, right?

Two literary devices that are at work here that you've got to see to really feel the weight of the story. One is juxtaposition. So chapter 4 and chapter 5 are being juxtaposed, as David mentioned in the welcome today.

Two different kings struggling with pride. Two different responses. It's a compare and contrast story. But then at the same time, the other literary device that really highlights that, I've mentioned it a couple times, is that from chapter 2 to 7, the text is not in Hebrew.

It's in Aramaic. One of the only places in the Old Testament where you don't have Hebrew, the original language, but you have a different language, the Babylonian language. And it's another literary device that's not as commonly known as juxtaposition.

That's chiasm. Okay, chiasm, what is that? It's when you have a structure, something like A, B, C, C, B, A. So if you've read the wonderful book, Julia Donaldson's *The Gruffalo*, you've read a great chiasm story.

[8 : 33] In *The Gruffalo*, mouse meets, what is it? I'm trying to remember. Fox, owl, snake. I've read it a thousand times. I have five kids. Mouse meets fox, owl, snake.

Snake, owl, fox. That's the story. That's a chiasm. Chapter 2 corresponds to chapter 7, chapter 3 to chapter 6, chapter 4 and 5.

They're corresponding. They're the very center. Chiasms try to get you to find middles and focus on them. Here's the middle, and it's about the pride of kings. And so we see that this book about idolatry that we've been working through is really about pride.

And we saw that last time with Nebuchadnezzar, but here we come again to the same issue, but a different response. So that's the basic point. Compare and contrast. See the response to pride in our hearts.

And so let's look at that together. Spiritual cancer. Pride. Pride. It's a spiritual cancer at the bottom of our souls. It's being juxtaposed between these two chapters.

[9 : 34] Are you Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar? And let's see it through the lens of two different answers to pride. How pride blocks repentance. Secondly, and finally, the writing on the wall.

So first, two different answers to the problem of pride. And Belshazzar, his name is very similar to Daniel's Babylonian name, Belteshazzar, which basically just means Bel, this Babylonian god, is my king or my god.

So he's a pagan king, and he throws a great feast in verse 1. A thousand lords. He takes the vessels, the cups, the bowls from the temple in Jerusalem, the true God's temple that Nebuchadnezzar had stolen.

And during this great feast, he drinks wine from them. And it says, doing that, the fingers of a hand appear right on the wall a message that he cannot read, that nobody can read.

But it's a message of judgment. And this is where we get, even if you've never read the Bible before or never read the book of Daniel, this is where we get the idiom in English, the writing on the wall. Right here, Daniel 5.

[10 : 40] And Daniel then comes and interprets what is taking place here. And he does not, and this is key, he doesn't just translate the message. He doesn't just interpret it. He first tells a story, and the story that he tells is the story of Nebuchadnezzar.

So you see that in verse 17 and following. Starting in verse 18, he says, let me interpret this for you, Belshazzar, but first you need to remember the story of Nebuchadnezzar. So he takes us back to Daniel 4.

And what does he say? He said, the most high God, the real God, gave Nebuchadnezzar everything. It was all a gift. His kingdom, his glory, his wealth, it was all a gift. Nebuchadnezzar did not acknowledge that.

And his heart became proud. And in a moment where he stood over the city, he said, this is all because of my glory. And we learned, we saw that a couple weeks ago, and we saw what pride really is.

Pride is saying, my life is my own. Every good thing that I have in my life is because of me. Every bad thing that's happening in my life is because I'm not getting what I deserve.

[11 : 44] It's because of somebody else. And so pride is the self-inflated high ego. And it's so inflated that it's like blowing up a balloon too far.

You know, if you blow up a balloon too much, it will just pop. And pride is like that. The heart is blown up to the point where one little criticism, one event can just be the final little prick that undoes the prideful person, the prideful heart.

It's really fragile, in other words. And what happened? Nebuchadnezzar was given by God what he deserved and what he wanted. In other words, if you try to be more than a human being, you become less.

And he was dehumanized. He became a beast of the field. But then Daniel says to Belshazzar, remember Nebuchadnezzar looked up. And then the text says he knew.

And that's code for he repented. And God restored him and God changed his life from the inside out. God, we saw last time, God loves to redeem prideful people. He loves to rescue us from our pride.

[12:44] And I wonder how many people in here today, again, want to be rescued from walking into every room and thinking about themselves. I want to be rescued from that. And here's the juxtaposition.

Here's where the core of the text, the story, it's in verse 22. He tells Nebuchadnezzar's story. And then he says, and you, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though, here's the devastating line, though you knew all this.

You knew what God requires of you. You knew what God had done in the story of redemption in Nebuchadnezzar's life. But you never humbled your heart. And that very night he died because of the pride of his heart.

This is a warning passage. St. Augustine says the prideful person loves to be praised but never to be examined. And this is a passage that's really asking you, if you were here two weeks ago or today, we've just rehearsed the story of Nebuchadnezzar.

Did you take the story of Nebuchadnezzar and allow it, let God examine you and look down to the bottom of your soul and say, Lord, rescue me from my pride.

[13:51] Did you do that work? Did you repent? That's the question of chapter 5. Because chapter 5 is a warning passage of the fall of a man who knew everything of the story of Nebuchadnezzar's redemption but ignored it.

But did not repent. But did not confess his pride before the Lord. What does that mean? We can say it really quickly. What is repentance? Repentance is something like agreeing with God that you are a sinner.

A sinner of saying with God, yes, I'm measured, I'm weighed, and the conviction that you're putting, it's true of me. And then turning outside of yourself to look for rescue and look for hope and look for redemption away from your internal resources.

And that's what Belshazzar fails to do. So, secondly, that means that this is a story about how our prideful hearts can block repentance in our lives. And have we really examined ourselves and looked at that carefully?

Let me give you three ways that can take place, secondly. Remember, verse 22 and 23 is the real key. You knew the story of your predecessor, but you ignored it.

[15:01] And he teaches us here a few ways of how pride can get in the way of a repentant life. And here's, we could ask it like this, okay, tell me how, Daniel. Tell me how this works exactly in Belshazzar's life.

And here he says, you knew all this. You knew the story. What did he know? He knew, first, the story of redemption. We call that special revelation.

God's unveiling of himself in history to save us. That's special revelation. But then, down in verse 23, it says, also you ignored the God in whose hand is your breath.

So, he said, but also God had revealed himself to you generally as well. That your very breath is in God's hands. And you ignored that too. So, in other words, he's saying God revealed himself specially and generally, redemptively and commonly to you, Belshazzar.

But in both instances, you didn't pay attention. You didn't look for it. You ignored it. And what do we learn? We learn, first, that the prideful person, the prideful heart, knows God, yes, truly, absolutely, but ignores God.

[16:09] And that, this is Psalm 14. Psalm 14 talks about the fool, but it uses the word fool in a technical sense. So, it's not calling somebody a fool in a pejorative way or a critical way, but actually calling out the truth of what foolishness is.

And it says, the fool says in their heart, there is no God. And so, in the Bible and in this story, there is no such thing as theoretical atheism. Theoretical atheism is intellectual atheism.

It says there is no God by way of reason, logic, science. But it's saying that actually doesn't exist because we all know God. God has revealed himself specially, redemptively.

It's written in scripture, but also generally, commonly. And the issue is not theoretical atheism. It's practical atheism. It's an issue of the heart. We ignore it. Our prideful hearts, we ignore God's revelation.

And what does Romans 1 say? We suppress that truth in unrighteousness. And this really is a story in the Old Testament that teaches the truth of Romans 1, 18 and following.

[17:12] That we all know God, but we've suppressed that truth in unrighteousness. Our pride, very simple first. Our pride causes us to ignore God, even though he really has revealed himself.

Are you? Are you suppressing the revelation of God that has been spoken into this world and history in your very life?

It is God who's giving us life and breath. But are we pushing that down and suppressing that in our lives? And ultimately ignoring him? That's the first question of the heart in this passage.

Am I suppressing the truth of his revelation in my life? Secondly, the prideful person also, the prideful person, the prideful heart is not repentant. We've seen that.

But yet is very religious. All right, so back to the party. Back to the feast that gets thrown here. What does he say? You do all this, but you ignored it.

[18:08] And then Daniel goes on to explain that. Verse 23, he says, You instead lifted yourself up against the Lord. How? How? By bringing in the vessels from Jerusalem and drinking wine out of those vessels from the temple in Jerusalem.

All right, what is he talking about? He's explaining how Belshazzar ignored God. Belshazzar threw a big party. A Dionysian feast, we might say.

A big throwdown. And he's, from verse 1, he's drinking. And just notice, if you have the text out in front of you, look with me very quickly at verse 1 to 4. Notice the repetition.

Before a thousand of his lords, he drank wine. Then verse 2. When he tasted the wine, he made a command. Then verse 3. Then they brought the golden vessels in, and he drank from those vessels.

Drank wine from those vessels. And then verse 4. He drank wine. So four times he drank wine. And when he did that, he drank wine. And when he did that, he drank wine.

[19:08] What's going on here? This isn't just a party. That's a way of talking about liturgy. This is a ritual. This is a temple feast.

What Belshazzar has done is he's created a temple. And he's created it in his own honor. And he's drinking wine liturgically. And he's got a thousand of his lords underneath him and his wives and his concubines.

See, the reason he's gathered the whole kingdom is because this is a worship service. It's a party and a worship service at the very same time. And we learned that what he did was he took the vessels from Jerusalem, and he used them to actually drink to the gods of silver and gold and bronze, which means just himself.

His wealth, his bounty, his glory. That's what's going on here. That means, what does Daniel say? He says, it's not just that he threw a great party. It's not just that he got drunk.

It's that when he went and got the vessels from Jerusalem and used them to worship the gods of gold, silver, and bronze, he was actively contending, mocking the real God.

[20:15] He knew. He knew about the real God. And he was actively mocking him, spitting in his face and saying, I reject you. I choose to self-justify with gold and silver and bronze, with iron, with my wealth.

He said, in other words, you are not my God. Wealth is my God. He was actively saying that to Yahweh, to the God of the Bible, to the God of the Old Testament. And that, look, what does that teach us?

It teaches us the prideful heart. We are never neutral people. We are always worshipping. We are very religious through and through.

We always have an object of worship out in front of us Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. And you can know what that object of worship is in your life by asking, where am I putting my time and my talent and my money, my treasure, and giving myself, giving my stuff.

It's an indication of what you're worshipping in your life. And we see that all of us, we know God, and therefore we are very religious. And even when we're suppressing that truth and unrighteousness, we still remain religious creatures.

[21:19] And this passage takes it a step further. It says that putting our worship, our time, our talent, our treasure, ultimately into anything but the real God, centering our lives on anything but the real God, is actually actively contending against God.

It's fighting God. It's mocking Him. The God who made us and the God who gives us everything, our life and our breath, and offers us the hope of redemption. And what the passage does is it really highlights the story.

It really shows the fragility of that position. Just think about it for a second. He's very prideful. He refuses and refuses to humble himself before the real God.

It leads him to defiantly self-justify by saying, no, I worship gold and silver and bronze. That is my salvation. That is the point of my life.

That is my meaning. And then as soon as the handwriting on the wall appears, just like Nebuchadnezzar in the dreams, the text in verse 6 says, his knees started knocking.

[22:23] So it's cartoonish. It's like Looney Tunes. His knees started knocking. As soon as one little poke, as soon as the real God shows up, the fragility of the things we chase is utterly exposed.

And it makes us afraid. It's been the message of the entire book. We say it really every week. You're probably tired of hearing it. It's the same message week in and week out from this chapter. But this text takes it a little further because there's also a joke that you can't quite see in the English text.

And the joke in this passage, the humor in this passage, is in that same line, verse 6. When it says, his knees were knocking. The phrase just before that and with that, in the Aramaic text, it's an idiom.

And very literally, it's translated to, the knots of his loins were untied. The knots of his loins were untied. Now, to put that in the mildest public setting, what it's saying is that he had a bad tummy ache in that moment.

And he's standing, and you see the joke, he's standing in front of a thousand lords worshiping himself, defiantly against the God who made him and gives him life and breath. And it says, the knots of his loins, the stomach, was undone.

[23:38] Utter humiliation in public here is what's happening. And then the queen mother, when she says, you should call Daniel, I remember him from of old.

In verse 12, she uses the same phrase again to mock her son. She says, Daniel, he can solve puzzles. He can tell riddles. He can tell you the interpretation.

And the language she uses is, Daniel can untie the knots. In other words, she's poking at him and saying, you've embarrassed yourself. And the point of that joke in Aramaic, I can't read Aramaic.

There's maybe one person in this room who can, I don't know. But the commentators tell us this. The point of the joke is that, one, when the real God shows up in our lives, we are undone.

He exposes our idols. He exposes the fragility of our position of putting anything else at the center of our lives but him. And the question today is, what are you worshiping?

[24:40] He worshiped gold, silver, bronze, iron. What are you worshiping in your life right now precisely because it does not challenge you? Precisely because that idol will never ask you to examine your heart.

It's dead. And what are you choosing instead of the Lord that maybe because you say, I don't want to do the hard work, the painful work of self-examination.

And looking at the heart of my pride and really asking, where is pride still holding on to parts of my heart? And really go through the pain of repentance. But boy, repentance is painful, but gold and silver and bronze cannot save you.

But the real God can. And thirdly, finally in this point, and we'll move to the close. That leads us to see that the last way this warning passage, pride, a prideful heart will distract us from repentance, is precisely that distraction.

Distraction. This may be the most important thing. Distraction. When you read this passage and you learn a little bit about the historical context, one of the things that's really important to know, but you can gather just from reading this chapter, is that by the end of the feast, we realize Persia is already in the city.

[26:01] The Persian soldiers are already there. They're actively coming for him while he's feasting. And a little bit of, we know this from Herodotus and other ancient Near Eastern sources, but Belshazzar had already lost.

He had gone out of the city walls and fought Persia before this and had lost a great battle. His army in this scene has already been defeated. So what is this passage really, what's going on in his prideful heart?

What does the prideful heart do? What is he doing? He knows, he knows he's about to die. He knows that the Persian soldiers, the assassins, are inside the city walls.

We even know exactly how they did it from ancient Near Eastern sources. Only a few of them came through. They dug a portion of the river Euphrates out to get underneath the castle walls. And they came for him, and he knew they were coming.

What is he doing? This is escapism. This is coping. Death is on his doorstep. And he chooses the Dionysian feast. But more than that, he chooses in the last moments to worship himself and to worship gold and silver and his wealth and his success, even though he knows it's all about to go away.

[27 : 13] It's all about to end. You see the defiance? In the last moment, he literally chooses to spit in God's face by drinking from the vessels. This is why the judgment comes in.

This is not some random day. This is a lifetime of saying no actively to God. Romans 1 says that God actually gives us what we want.

He gives us over. And you see, it's a warning passage. And death is on his doorstep. You know, we, friends, we feast on all sorts of things in our lives to cope so that sometimes we can avoid asking the biggest and hardest questions.

And that's what this story is ultimately about. He's literally drinking himself to death. He's literally feasting to death. He's literally worshiping gold unto death. Let me give you one example of maybe how we do that.

Neil Postman wrote the famous book in 1983, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, *Entertaining Ourselves to Death*. And in it, he compared, he contrasted George Orwell's 1984 with Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

[28 : 24] And he said that while George Orwell warned us of, you know, a police state, big brother, suppressing our lives, being the ultimate enemy, he said Huxley warned us of being consumed by entertainment to the point where we stop asking questions, stop seeking truth.

And in 1983, Postman, boy, so prescient, so early, he said Huxley was right. And a recent book that's been published, *Scrolling Ourselves to Death*, Brett McCracken writes this.

He said, He said, Think about the liturgy of our day-to-day lives, the worship of our day-to-day lives. Heads down, phones out, fingers scrolling.

This is the humanoid posture of our age. Sit in the cafe, look around, every eye on a device. Wait in line at the store, 45 seconds to spare, a quick opportunity.

Notice how hard it is to resist the urge to pull out your phone and to do something, anything, to fill that blank space. From the rising of the sun to its setting, we scroll through the day, we scroll through life, we are scrolling ourselves to death.

[29 : 32] Here's a question that I think this passage calls the modern reader to ask. Have I replaced seeking with consuming? Have I replaced self-examination with Instagram and TikTok and Facebook and YouTube?

And have I become a person who says I'm going to look at one thing and loses an hour? And it happens again and again, every day, day after day after day, entertaining ourselves to death, consuming until we...

We're in danger of the Dionysian consumption, of consuming until we find we never searched. Until that last day, we never looked, we never examined, we never did the hard work of looking and saying, Am I a sinner?

Like the Bible calls me to see. What do you reach for when you feel convicted? Is it your phone to cope? What can we do? Is there hope for that virtual world?

Belshazzar was living in a virtual world. It was fake. He was partying while the assassin was at his doorstep. What do we need? We need the writing on the wall, finally and briefly.

[30 : 41] The writing appears during the feast. The writing interrupts Belshazzar's suppression of the truth. The writing touches his heart and brings the fragility of his life to bear on him.

And the writing was, Mene, mene, tekel, parson. And it probably wasn't written in words because those are Aramaic words. So if it was literally those words, the enchanters and the astrologers and the magicians would have been able to read that.

Instead, it was probably numerical markings that needed an interpretation. Sometimes in the ancient world, numerical markings that looked to us sort of like scratches, things like that, would actually stand in the place of words.

And they had to be interpreted by someone who understood. That's probably what's happening here. And what is the language? Measured. Mene, mene. Measured. Tekel.

Weighed. Parson. Divided. And it's very simple. It's very plain what's going on here. And it's simply this. Belshazzar, who is an example of the human condition, all of us.

[31 : 44] You have been measured against the standard of who God made you to be. Against God's moral law. Against the calling to humble yourselves and give your life away to the Lord.

You've been weighed. You've been found unjust. Your life is in the balance. The scales are out. And you've been found wanting and therefore divided. Your kingdom today will be divided.

And that very night, it was divided. Nebuchadnezzar had the same experience. But he looked up. He awoke.

He repented. What is repentance? Repentance is saying, I agree with you, God, about the condition of my heart. I agree with you about my sin. And I look outside myself for hope, for redemption, for salvation.

Look, for us today, this passage is obviously a warning and an invitation. And the invitation is something like, if you don't think today that you need the work of repentance in your life, then that is the uncovering, the exposure of the fact that you are weighed, you are measured and divided.

[32 : 55] If you come today not realizing that need, then it's proof of the point of the warning. And what this passage is really calling us to see in every one of our lives is God saying, look at yourself and bear the conviction of your sin.

Stand before the Lord and really look at your sin. Really look at it closely. The pride of your heart and say, Lord, I need you. I cannot save myself. He's not saying, look, he's not saying weighed and measured.

Boy, you've got to get the scales of justice right in your life. You've got to put enough good works on that other side. If you would just, I'll give you another year and maybe you can get it right. No, he's saying that you've got to say today, I cannot fix this.

There is no hope for me. What are we to do? Eric Alexander, this is the last word. Eric Alexander says, what will erase this divine graffiti on the wall?

What will erase the divine graffiti on the wall of our hearts? Weighed, measured, found wanting. And the answer is in Colossians 2, verses 13 and 14.

[34 : 00] And here's what it says. It says, you were dead in your trespasses and sins. You were found wanting. And God canceled the record of your death that stood against you.

This he set aside. He pushed it out. He pushed the scales away for you because he nailed it. He nailed your injustice to the cross. He nailed it to the cross. What is Paul saying to us?

He's saying that Jesus Christ, the son of God, came into this world. And he was measured. He was weighed. And he was found righteous. Yet he was divided. Yet he was the one who experienced the death.

Yet he was the one who was crushed for the injustice of our lives. He was sacrificed for our injustice. The message here of Daniel 4 and 5 together is God loves.

He wants to give mercy. The answer is mercy. He doesn't say get your life right by balancing the scales. There is not enough humility to get you back to where you need to be. Not enough.

[35 : 04] You can't try it. You can't will yourself that way. No, he's saying God wants to shed mercy abroad in your life. And he wants to do it because he nailed the record of your debt to Jesus on the cross.

He died for you. And so this is an invitation story. We're all Nebuchadnezzar. We're all Belshazzar. But will we be Nebuchadnezzar? Will we repent? Will we look up?

Here's another way to say it. Come back tonight. We're going to celebrate the Lord's Supper. In the light of this story, this feast, God is inviting us today to a different feast. A very different feast.

Not a feast where we take the gods in our lives to worship ourselves. But a feast where we look at the broken body and blood of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

And say, he was measured. He was weighed. He was righteous. But he was divided for me. That's the mercy of the feast. The cross preaches a far better feast than Dionysian feasts like this.

[36 : 05] Let us pray. Father, we ask that you would make us repentant people. We plead for your mercy. We thank you that it is real. It is true. Your love is a reality through Jesus' cross.

And so we pray, Lord, that we would examine ourselves today. Help us as we sing to examine ourselves and say, where are we holding on to pride in our lives? Maybe we've never repented, Lord. There's someone here. We pray that you would do your work now that you love to do.

And that's bring a sinner home through repentance. And we pray that in Jesus' name. Amen.