

Deliver Us From Evil

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 April 2024

Preacher: Tom Muir

[0 : 0 0] We're going to read together from the Old Testament, from the book of Judges. We're going to read chapter one. After the death of Joshua, the people of Israel inquired of the Lord, who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?

The Lord said, Judah shall go up. Behold, I have given the land into his hand. And Judah said to Simeon, his brother, come up with me into the territory allotted to me, that we may fight against the Canaanites. And I likewise will go with you into the territory allotted to you. So Simeon went with him. Then Judah went up and the Lord gave the Canaanites and the Parasites into their hand, and they defeated 10,000 of them at Bezek. They found Adonai at Bezek and fought against him and defeated the Canaanites and the Parasites. Adonai, Bezek, fled, but they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and his big toes.

And Adonai, Bezek said, 70 kings with their thumbs and their big toes cut off, used to pick up scraps under my table. As I have done, so God has repaid me. And they brought him to Jerusalem and he died there. And the men of Judah fought against Jerusalem and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire. And afterwards, the men of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the hill country in the Negev and in the low land. And Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron. Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kyriath Arba and they defeated Shashai and Ahimon and Tal Ma. From there, they went against the inhabitants of De Beir. The name of De Beir was formerly Kyriath Sefer.

And Caleb said, he who attacks Kyriath Sefer and captures it, I will give him Aqsa, my daughter, for a wife. And Othiniel, the son of Canaanites, Caleb's younger brother, captured it. And he gave him Aqsa, his daughter, for a wife. And when she came to him, she urged him to ask her father for a field. And she dismounted from her donkey and Caleb said to her, what do you want? She said to him, give me a blessing. Since you have set me in the land of the Negev, give me also the springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs. And the descendants of the Kenai, Moses' father-in-law, went up with the people of Judah from the city of Palms into the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the Negev near Arad. And they went and they settled with the people. And Judah went with Simeon, his brother, and they defeated the Canaanites who inhabited Zephaph and devoted it to destruction. So the name of the city was called Hormah. Judah also captured Gaza with its territory and Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory. And the Lord was filled, was with Judah, and he took possession of the whole country. But he could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had chariots of iron. And Hebron was given to Caleb, as Moses had said, and he drove out from it the three sons of Anach. But the people of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem.

So the Jebusites have lived with the people of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day. The house of Joseph also went up against Bethel, and the Lord was with them. And the house of Joseph scouted out Bethel. Now the name of the city was Lutz. And the spies saw a man coming out of the city, and they said to him, please show us the way into the city, and we will deal kindly with you.

[3 : 38] And he showed them the way into the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword. But they let the man and all his family go, and the man went out to the land of the Hittites and built a city and called its name Lutz. That is its name to this day. Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Bethshion in its villages, or Ta'anach in its villages, or the inhabitants of Dore in its villages, or the inhabitants of Iblam in its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo in its villages, for the Canaanites persisted in dwelling in that land. And when Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not drive them out completely. And Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Getzer. So the Canaanites lived in Getzer among them.

Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Ketron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol, so the Canaanites lived among them, but became subject to forced labor.

Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Akko, or the inhabitants of Sidon, Sidon, or Achlab, or Akzib, or of Helba, or of Afik, or of Riho. So the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, and the inhabitants of the land, for they did not drive them out. Naftali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth Anath, so they lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and of Beth Anath became subject to forced labor for them. The Amorites pressed the people of Dan back into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the plain. The Amorites persisted in dwelling in Mount Harris, in Ajilon, and in Shah al-Bim. But the hand of the house of Joseph rested heavily on them, and they became subject to forced labor. And the border of the Amorites ran from the ascent of Akra-Bim from Sayla and upwards. This is God's holy word. Tom, come and preach for us.

Okay, good to be with you all, and we're going to spend some time looking at that chapter. Now, that chapter, which did take a while to read, and which contains many names that are maybe unfamiliar to you and are difficult to say, is all about places and people. People like us, although different from us. And they lived through the times and the dealings of God in those times that they lived. So they had to experience all the stuff that was going on.

But you might be thinking, what am I supposed to do with this stuff? How am I supposed to make sense of it? And if this is a series that in some way ties into the gospel, I'm not sure how this is going to go. You might not see at this point in time how we're going to connect all of this to the gospel. So what I'd like to do tonight is I'm not going to look at every single verse in the chapter, but I'd like to hopefully frame things and preach an introductory sermon to this book that's going to pick out four key themes from this chapter that I think you'll see recur as we go through the book. But I hope as well that we're going to see how God is behind all that's going on here, and we can even see the gospel even in this first chapter of the book. A number of introductory bullet points though to start with. These are these are just things to say, to frame us diving into this book, the book of Judges. First of all, I call this sermon, I don't always think of titles for sermons, but I decided to call this one Deliver Us from Evil. Now Deliver Us from Evil is a line that we get from a prayer in the New Testament, but I think Deliver Us from Evil can describe many of the incidents that happen throughout the book of Judges, and actually we could broaden that theme to describe the theme of the Bible. And it's also the theme of one of the greatest prayers we can make, Lord God Deliver Us from Evil. It's much of what goes on in this book.

[7 : 45] Second bullet point, and I read this, I thought it was helpful. Somebody I was reading about the book of Judges said, read Judges before you read Judges. So I like that. What he meant was, I think, first of all, read it through, as you would a story, so as to get a feel for what's going on.

Because as we read it, you will have got the sense that an awful lot is going on. And if you come to it, cold as it were, and maybe in a sermon, you spend most of your time trying to catch up with what's going on. So if you've got time, and if you're going to be a part of St. Columbus for the next little while listening to this series, then it might be good. You may not have thought about doing this, but maybe spend some of your evenings reading through the book of Judges and just getting a feel for what's going on. In the book of Judges, third bullet point, you'll meet 12 Judges. So if you're totally new to the book and you don't know what's going on, there are these key figures, characters, most of whom are men, but not all of whom are men. And they don't always judge. That's what's slightly confusing about it. You know, if you think of them just as people who will lay down the law in a kind of courtroom context, you won't find too much of that. But another way to think about them is perhaps to call them deliverers, deliverers from evil. These are figures who God uses to help deliver the people from some of the messes that they get themselves into.

On that though, as judges or deliverers, these are flawed types of a greater and perfect judge who is to come. One of the things we see over and over through the scriptures is that as God works through time and history, through individuals and humans like us, who are therefore fallible and flawed like us, in many ways points forward continually to the need to somebody who can do it properly, who can really perfectly judge and administer justice and save the people. Many of the judges, in fact, not all of the judges, don't do everything perfectly. And so there are many mistakes and problems in the Book of Judges. Next bullet point, I've lost count of which bullet point I'm on, but the next one is that as a result of these judges being flawed types of the perfect deliverer, we meet troubling material in the book. Now, it might be that all you know of the Book of Judges is what a friend of a friend has said, that it's the kind of book that should never be in the Bible. It's deeply worrying. There's war and all kinds of things going on.

And so you might be thinking to yourself, I don't know how to handle this book. Oh, you might have read it and thought, you're quiet time and you're reading about some battle and devastation and so good question and good point. And I think the answer to that, because this is a bullet point in brief, is rather than looking away or trying to kind of shovel it under a carpet somewhere, we actually take the time as you're going to do over the next number of weeks to read it through and say what's going on here in the context of the wider book, the Bible and God who is over all of this. We're nearly done with the bullet points.

Second last one is to say that this is a part of God's scripture. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament. Jesus didn't caveat the book of judges and say, actually, there's a problematic bit that I'm not too comfortable with. So let's remove it. He didn't do that. And therefore we take this as his scripture and we approach it in that way. And finally, as we approach this book in a very ancient context with much that might seem distant and strange and troubling to us, this is in essence a book about how humans should live. And therefore it's a book that matters to us. It's a book about how humans should live and who will rescue them when they go astray.

[11 : 55] And that's a book that I need to read. And I would suggest it's a book we all need to read and take some time to consider. So with those eight or nine or however many bullet points that were in mind, and you might have had others to introduce the book of judges, but maybe you'll pick up on them over the next few weeks. Let me now turn with you to the chapter. And as I said, we're going to look at four particular themes that I want to pick out of the chapter itself.

And the first one is leadership. So read verse one with me, please. After the death of Joshua, the people of Israel inquired of the Lord, who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites to fight against them? Leadership.

The people act as a body, as a group, and they take a question to God. So what that tells us immediately is here is a people whose sense of self, at least in this moment in time, is intricately bound up with their deity. They want to know what God will say to them about the predicament that they have. Now part of the predicament that they have is because the previous leader that they had has now died. So Joshua is a pivotal figure in the history of God's people, the Israelites, and in the Old Testament. He was preceded himself by Moses. You've probably heard of Moses, huge figure, very important figure in the Old Testament. Again, a leader designated by God to lead his people out of captivity where they had been in the slavery of Egypt and on toward the promise that he had given them. When Moses had died, Joshua had taken over.

Now Joshua has died. Who's going to take over? Who did they go to? Who should they ask for help? And what we find is that in this moment in time, they go direct to God and they ask him for help.

And please notice what maybe answer they get. So we follow through into verse 2. Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites to fight against them? The Lord said, Judah shall go up. Behold, I have given the land into his hands.

[14 : 16] Now what that tells us immediately is that God isn't unprepared for their question. You see the way that he answers their question with a decisive answer. He says, here's what's going to happen. I've made this decision. These are the tribe that are going to do this and this is going to be the outcome. And the reason for this is because the events that we're reading through here aren't random. I mean, we encounter our lives in a sense cold. We come into each day not really knowing what's going to happen. And it may well have been the same for these people. They were a pivotal point in their life, their history, and their inquiring of God, but the events aren't cold to God. Now part of the reason we can say that is because, as I said, we take this book in the wider context of the Scriptures, a couple of things on that.

This is all about God's people at this moment in time on a journey. Now, you may love or you may think it's really corny to speak about life as a journey, but these people literally were on a journey and they were on a journey to a land, a land that had been promised to them by God, because it was his will that he would establish his people in a place where they could worship him. Now, that goes way back. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this, but that goes way back to somebody like Abraham, again, a pivotal figure in the history of the Israelites. Genesis chapter 12, God calls Abraham, he makes a promise to Abraham, a lot of which is tied up with the journey he will make to a place. And in that place, God will establish him and his offspring, and they will be there to worship him. If I was to take you back to the start of the preceding book, we're in Judges here, but if I was to take you back to Joshua, that's the kind of thing that you'll see right at the beginning of the book. I will take you back just for one moment in the first verse, after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, the son of Nun,

Moses' assistant, Moses, my servant is dead, now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all these people into the land that I am giving them to the people of Israel. So this hasn't come out of nowhere, they're on a journey, and that journey has been given to them in many ways by God.

The purpose of that, of course, is that they won't be wanderers, they will have a place, and they will have a place where they can know the Lord. They were to be God's covenant people, he declared that he was their God, and they would worship him, which is appropriate.

That's what God wanted for them in many ways. And can I just say one more thing on this? As they traveled and as they set up camp along the way in their wandering days, and then as they finally established themselves later in the story in the place, one of the key things about them was that they were to be God's people in God's place under his rule, under his good oversight, knowing his justice and his mercy and his goodness and all of this, and worshiping him. And if you like, being that light to all the surrounding peoples so that they would see the goodness of the true God who is over all things. And in many ways, that itself isn't random. If you think about the wider context of the Bible, take it as far back as what God did in the garden, where he established a people in a place under his good oversight and his rule. What a blessing that must have been to have lived in that environment as a good place, spoiled of course by the tragedy of the fall.

[18:03] And go to the other extreme, if you follow through the Bible, through the pages of the New Testament and to the promise of what will come and what God is going to do, he will make a new heavens and a new earth. The Lord Jesus will be with his people and it will be again a place where God's people are in God's place under God's good oversight and his rule. That is what God wants. He wants human beings to live in a beautiful, blessed, worshipful space. And if you like, he's taken this people in this moment in time and he's put them on a particular journey, but it's all so that they will know the goodness of his oversight and his care. And he wants all the surrounding people to see that. But there's more to say and I don't have time to go into all of that.

Leadership is a theme that will occur. I'm not going to say any more about it, but you see the way in which after the death of Joshua, these people go to God. Now that's a good start. Verse 1 is a good start. Second theme and it's a big one is war. This may be one of the reasons why, if you've read the book before, we don't always find it an easy read. But we find war very quickly cropping up because again, I don't have to go much outside of verse 1, the people inquired of the Lord, who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites to fight against them? Okay. So these are the people who live in the land. Here are God's people coming in and their intention, their understanding of themselves at this moment in time is that they are to fight against these people. Now immediately, as I said, we might feel uncomfortable with it. We might feel that this is something that God wouldn't want. We might feel that God's people are behaving improperly and that's an understandable question as well. So it's worth us giving some time initially.

And this is just an initial look at this theme of war. And I want to tie in particularly war with the theme that Corey mentioned, which is idolatry. These things will keep recurring as you go through this book. War, as I said, we might think, well, this is the God of peace. I'm a Christian. You might be a Christian. You might follow the teachings of Jesus who says, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Absolutely, you should do that. So what do we do with war? What do we do when we find God answering His people in the affirmative? Again, you might have said, oh, the people are asking God, we're going to fight the Canaanites, who shall go up against them? Maybe God's going to say, no, no, no, no, don't do it.

Don't fight a war. I don't wish you to do that. He doesn't say that. He affirms and says, this is who's going to go up and fight this initial battle. And as we go through the chapter, again, I'm not going to pick out all the instances by any means, but in verse 4, you find the figure of 10,000 people who've been killed. If you were to go to verse 7, you come across a gruesome story of a king who's effectively brutalized, his digits are cut off, and things progress in this way. And actually, in many ways, the spiral or cycle of things in the book gets worse as you go through it.

Things seem at points to be getting out of control. What's going on? Let me just say a couple of things. And again, this is an introductory sermon. What can we say about war? Well, the first thing to say is that God in many ways is testing his people. Now, that might be a strange thing to say and think, but I'm just going to dip into chapter 2. I'm cheating a little bit. In chapter 2, and in verse 22, let me read this. I'll read from verse 21. God says, I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died in order to test Israel by them, whether they will take care to walk in the way of the Lord as their fathers did or not. Now, as I said, I'll say more about God's purposes tied to idolatry. God does want the people to move the Canaanites out of the land. One of the initial reasons he gives here is that he's testing them to see whether they'll obey him or not. So this is something that he wants to happen, and God gives a directive to them. And the question that God has is, will they obey me?

[22 : 46] Let me just tie that word test to a word, excuse me, preceding. It's the same word that is used when God comes to Abraham and gives him a terrible request. He asks him to take his son and put him to death. And of course, the answer in that dreadful scenario is that Abraham doesn't have to go through with it because God provides the sacrifice, but God sees there the way in which his servant is so faithful and trusting and does as the Lord commanded. One of the key things that will come out of the book of Judges is whether or not the people will listen to God. They asked him a question, they asked him what they wanted him to do, what he wanted them to do. And one of the key things is whether they'll listen or not. So testing is a key thing and also preparing. In chapter 3, verse 2, he talks about the way in which they will need to be prepared for warfare.

Again, you might say, really, is that really so necessary? These were brutal days in many ways, and warfare was just in the air often. If you think about it, God's people had been subjugated, they'd been slaves, they'd been freed from that captivity, they'd been wanderers, and they were going to have to inhabit a land and defend a land against all kinds of people who were going to come against them. And so in many ways, practically speaking as a nation, they needed to learn the art of warfare. Now, still, you may say, I don't like this theme, but these are verses that come out of the passages that chapter 2 and chapter 3, that help us understand some of what's going on here in the history of this people.

But let me say one more thing about warfare, and now I'm kind of kind of bridged into the third point. So we've thought a little bit about leadership, we've thought initially about warfare, and let me connect in now to the theme of idolatry. And this is a key theme in the book, and in fact, it's a key theme in the Bible, and it's a key theme in our hearts.

Idolatry was rife in the land as the people entered. The people were not worshipers of God, Yahweh, as we meet Him in the Old Testament. They had their own deities, they worshiped their own deities, they quite literally worshiped idols, statues, and all kinds of different things.

That's a problem for the God who is the true God over all things, and who won't, if you like, share the platform with these confected gods of the peoples. That's a problem for Him at that level, but it's also a problem because of the practices that idolaters employ in their idolatry.

[25 : 40] And what I mean by that is this was a land that was saturated by a behaviour that would mean that you wouldn't want to have lived there. There were many practices that we would describe as evil.

They would make you really, really uncomfortable to be anywhere near this place, and they were detestable to God. And so the first thing to think about in terms of the context, as these people, God's people, move into the land, is that the idolatry that they discover there isn't, if you like, morally neutral. They're not moving into a place that was just nice, and the people were nice at that level. Here is a place that is infected, if you like, by moral evil.

Let me say a few more things then about this idolatry and the way in which God deals with it. As He moves His people in and He seeks to cleanse or move those who lived in the land out, first of all, this is not the random judgment of the idolates. Now we often object when we see countries going to war against one another for good reason. And I think we should do, because often what's involved is the brutal and irrational hatred of one human being for another. We have no right to do that.

I have no right to look at my neighbour and despise them for who they are. If they're a different ethnicity, they've got a different culture or whatever. That's not what is happening here.

This is not about God's people seeing another people group and saying, we don't like them, we don't like them to the extent that we're just going to wipe them out. This is about a people who've been commissioned by God to exercise His verdict and His judgment on the land and on the people. Now even there you may say, well, what gives God the right to do that? There's still a problem there, and I'm still quite uneasy about what's going on here. So let's address that question.

[27 : 42] Remember what God is doing in the big picture. Remember what He wants for humanity, and remember what He designed and made. He made a world that was perfect, where it was peaceful, where you would never have known oppression, where you would never have known someone sniping at you behind your back, much less going to war with you and threatening your family. That was God's intention, and that was God's design and His creation, which was ruined by sin. And the question from that point on for human beings is and remains, God, will you deliver us from evil? And so He's taken this people, if you like, He's incubating the situation where His will is to establish this people in a place that they will know His good rule and that they will worship Him and live in peace, and that the peoples who live around about them will see the way in which they live, and they will say, and you can refer to a Bible verse where it makes this clear, what an amazing God you have. Who is like, who is like your God? That is God's intention. And what He has come to the point of doing in this moment in time, if you like, His, the ethics of God, the judgment is breaking in, and He is giving a verdict of judgment on the evil that exists in this land. Now, God has the right to do that because He's a holy God, and God has the right to do that because, and this again takes us back to the early pages of Genesis, where we sin, the consequence of our sin is death. If we sin against the holy God by telling a lie, or by perpetrating great evil and horror on whole generations of people, then we don't have the right to live. And actually, in His mercy,

God allows us to live, and God calls us to seek His mercy and come to know Him for who He is. And so what's happening here as God establishes His people is He is performing, if you like, a moment of judgment on this people. One writer puts it this way, when a nation has given way to such nameless and shameless wickedness that the land groans beneath the burden of its crimes, it's a mercy to the world when that wickedness is stamped out. That's a different way of looking at what's going on here. It is to say that God sees the evil that is perpetrated in the world and is grieved by it, and here He demonstrates His judgment that is to come. It's God saying, this is not good, and I will take this away. And in its place, I desire my people to be here, to know me and to worship me. Now, I'm not going to say any more about it. You'll hear more about the whole theme because these things recur throughout the whole book. But what I will do is come back to the application for us as Christians, because we're not to do this. This isn't for us. We're people who live in the light of the fact that the judgment of God that was exercised on this people in this particular way by the will of God in this time was also shown at the cross, at Calvary, where Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took upon Himself the wrath of God for sin. If you still struggle with what God is doing in showing His judgment on these people, then bear in mind that

Jesus Christ, who is the spotless, sinless, eternal Son of God, came with the express intention of taking upon Himself the just judgment of God, so that in the light of that, any idolater who walks the earth in our day can look to Jesus and be forgiven, and not only forgiven, but be restored from our idolatry, which does us no good at all. As Corey said earlier, idolatry, we think it's good and it's rotten. It binds our hearts up in the love of all kinds of things. Maybe we don't worship literal idols, but there's plenty of things that can capture our hearts, and it poisons us, and it stops us seeing the holy goodness of God. And so we live in the days where Jesus took upon Himself the judgment that idolaters deserved, so that me and you, and we pray our friends and our neighbors can look to Him and no forgiveness and freeing. But again, I'm sure you'll get more on that theme to come. I'm going to hit one more point and then we're finished. So we've looked at the leadership theme, we've looked at war and idolatry, and I'm going to talk finally about obedience.

So in the context of the chapter, God gives particular directives, of course, and one of the key things He says as you go out and as you make warfare is He says you must do it thoroughly.

Don't let any of the evil remain. Now, if you think about the big theme of what we've been talking about, you can start to see maybe why that's so important, because in the chapter, what we discover is the people don't do that. It seems to start well, okay? Back into the chapter from verse 11, from there they went against the inhabitants of De Beir, the name of De Beir with formerly Kiliath Sefer, and you get a story there of the way in which the people were victorious, and they moved out the people. You get some other stories of how that's the case, but the further we go on in the chapter, we start to hear stories of them failing in their mission, making pacts with some of the inhabitants, kind of cutting corners in the job that God had given them to do, and in other words, they're not fully obedient to the job that God has given to do, and why that matters is because God knows that the evil remains in the land as it starts to take root again, and as people employ different practices, different idolatries, different evil practices, it captures the heart of God's people and stops them being the people in the place under the good rule of God that he intended them to be, and therefore it has devastating consequences, and therefore we get the kind of cycle that you'll come across as you go through the book, that seems, things seem to keep disintegrating and getting worse and worse, and so what we get is this cycle of the people failing, falling into idolatry, committing sins, crying out to the Lord, deliver us from evil, and God sending a judge who comes, delivers them, you know some of the figures, Gideons, Samson's, other figures you've maybe never heard of because they're more obscure, and this becomes the pattern of the book in many ways, the cycle of the continual need of the people to be delivered from their foolishness, they make some terrible mistakes, don't we also, and they fall into terrible idolatry at times, don't we sometimes as well, and so obedience is the theme, and I'm just going to not take you into chapter 2 really, but if you have a church

[35 : 45] Bible you'll notice that the heading of chapter 2 is Israel's disobedience, and their call to account immediately, God sends a messenger, an angel of the Lord who comes at the start of chapter 2 and says, look, you haven't listened to me, look at what's happened, and he calls them to account for what they've done, and the terms in which he does that, he talks about the covenant that he is made with them, but that's another theme entirely, and I don't have time for that just now. This is the story of a bunch of human beings who make a bunch of mistakes, and in many ways therefore they're much like we are, and it's the story of people who lived in a very different time than us, and who maybe whose circumstances are different, and whose circumstances we struggle to grapple with, and yet the core of their experience remains the core of our experience as well. In the ruin of our hearts, where idolatry of whatever form takes hold, where we're pulled around by the different desires that call to us, the things that we think are better for us than the knowledge of God, the question remains for us, who will save us from ourselves, who will rescue us from our idolatry, and of course that's in many ways the reason why Jesus taught us his great prayer,

Lord deliver us from evil. Let me finish with those words, and I'll pray, and then we'll sing our concluding song together. Our Father, we pray that you would help us with your word, bless us by your Holy Spirit, so that over time we would understand it more, and you would help us to submit ourselves to it and listen to it. Help us also in the pages of the Book of Judges to encounter the one true and holy God, and we pray as well that we would see that you are the one who brings deliverance from evil, and so we pray even tonight, Lord, as we just get started in this book with all its challenges, that you would call us to yourself, and that you would help us to see that in you is true goodness. We pray this in the name of Jesus, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.