



Sermon – February 21, 2021
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Verses Covered This Week

Colossians 2:11 – 12

Colossians 1:22

Luke 12:50

Romans 6:3 – 4

Malachi 3:10 - 12

Let me invite you to open your Bibles to Colossians 2. We'll be in verse 11 this morning. And as you open your word, will you let our College Worship Team, let them know how much you enjoyed them this morning? I've noticed around town over the weekend as things thawed out that people are on the hunt for food everywhere you go. Heading to the grocery store, to the restaurants, there's a hunger after this isolation that we've had. My hope and prayer this morning is that we come to God's word with the same type of hunger. To be fed by the bread of life as we open this Scripture. If you remember last time we were in Colossians, we saw Paul speaking about the sign of our spiritual captivity. But this morning, we're going to see Him talk about the sign of our spiritual freedom: the sign of baptism. So if you'll follow along with me in the text, here's what Paul says in Colossians 2, verses 11 and 12.

¹¹In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Let's pray together.

God, as we come to Your word this morning, would You center our hearts so that in a fresh way we might see Your powerful work in our lives. And we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

Well, just a couple of years ago, I was up in Midland, Texas on a trip. And while I was out there, I hadn't been back in at least 20 years. Part of my childhood we spent there in second and third grade and it's my first chance to go back and see a city that I had lived in but hadn't been to in a long time. So I wanted to hit all the landmarks. I drove by my old school. I went by several other places. But the highlight for me was visiting First Baptist Midland. That's where our

family went to church while we were there. And as an 8-year-old, that's where I came to Christ. Their baptistery is a little bit different there. It's not in the worship center like ours is. It's actually out in the foyer, out in the lobby, just outside. And I was able to get into that lobby and to see that place where 30 years ago in 1990 as an 8-year-old, I went under the waters of Jesus and followed Him in baptism.

If you think about the nature of what baptism is, isn't it kind of strange? I mean, for you as parents, you're constantly telling your kids, "Don't dunk people under water when you're swimming in the pool. And yet, each week we show up here and we do exactly that same thing in this moment. I remember one of the first times our boys saw a baptism at our old church in Nashville. We did it in a big horse trough and when they brought that out, he saw them getting in there, wearing their bathing suits. And he's asking, "Dad, why are they getting in the bath tubs up there on the stage?" There's this sense of strangeness around baptism. But the strangeness of baptism is accentuated by the purpose behind baptism. The fact that what we're doing is declaring a reality that is strange to the world around us. The world around us can't make sense of the fact that in baptism, what we are saying is that the old self is dying. The new self is coming back to life. We are being demonstrating the fact that we have been united to Christ by faith. And as we come to this text this morning, we are sitting here in the heart of Colossians where Paul is confronting the false teachers who are seeking to add to the things that are going on in the church there by saying Jesus is essential, but He is not enough. And there seems to be some sort of tension when it comes to circumcision and baptism. And what we're going to find this morning is that as we look at this text, when we hear Paul explain to us the meaning of baptism, what we will see is that he shows us how baptism is a sign of the new covenant in Christ and it's also a sign of our new life in Christ. So notice how he begins back there in verse 11. He shows the way that it is a sign of this new covenant. And he does it by paralleling circumcision and baptism. He puts those things side by side as the covenant sign between God and His people. And we see how baptism is a sign of this new covenant in several ways here.

So if you'll notice at the start of the verse he shows us how baptism is a new covenant sign of our union with Christ. He says:

[In Him also were you circumcised with the circumcision made without human hands,](#)

Now, how did circumcision work back in this time period? When we think about it today, we think of sterile environments with medical professionals and proper tools. But back in those ancient time periods, in the Jewish custom, boys were circumcised in the temple on the eighth day. If you were to go back and look at the gospels, in Luke chapter 2 you see Jesus being there circumcised in the temple. And why is it that God gave His people the sign of circumcision as the covenant sign for His people? Well that happens back in Genesis 17 with Abraham. And the reason that God gives them this sign is rooted in the first promise of deliverance. The first promise of a Messiah in the Bible. If you go all the way back to Genesis 3:15 there is this promise that one day God will raise up a seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent. And so this sign of circumcision in which there is a sign given to the seed generating organ of a man is pointing back to that reality that is true all the way from Genesis 3. That one day this seed, this offspring, will come and Paul speaks here to the Colossians and he tells them, "You were circumcised." But what should catch our attention here, if you remember he is

writing to a primarily Gentile church. From a physical standpoint, what he just said, “You are circumcised,” probably for many of them was not true. So what does he mean here when he says, “You were circumcised.” What type of circumcision does he have in mind? Look back at what he says there. He says it’s not physical, but spiritual. He tells us that it’s a circumcision made without hands. This is the only place that this term appears in the New Testament. But it’s pointing back to an Old Testament reality. That throughout the giving of this sign of circumcision, there was always this expectation that one day there would be a circumcision that would not be of the flesh, but of the heart. That it would not be physical, but spiritual. That it would not be by human hands, but it would be by the Holy Spirit. So when Paul speaks here of the nature of this circumcision, he is speaking of the spiritual reality of what God has done for us in Christ. That we have been united with Him by faith. That’s why we don’t want to miss the very first words of this verse. If you look back at it, you can almost overlook it. It starts by saying, in Him. He speaks there of our union with Christ. Our connection to Him through faith. So that now what is true of Jesus is now true of us.

So we just made it through this winter storm and I’m curious by show of hands, how many you lost power at some point during the storm? I see many of the hands going up in the room. And as we learned, there were some who kept power the whole time and some who didn’t. And if you kept power the whole time, you might have been tempted to put up your hand anyways who didn’t get any side-eyes from the people sitting next to you. And the reason that some were able to keep their power is because their portion of the electric grid was deemed to be essential. There was someone or something that was deemed important enough that they couldn’t sacrifice power to that. But what happened is that in order to keep that powered, everything else connected to that portion of the grid stayed powered as well. In other words, those of you that didn’t lose power, you benefited from your connection to that which was essential. Because you were united to it, it was as if you were receiving those benefits for yourself that you only received because of your union and connection with that essential thing. That’s the picture of union with Christ that Paul is giving us here. That in the gospel, we’ve been united to a Savior so that now when God sees us, he no longer sees us as sinners, but as set free, as righteous, as beloved sons and daughters in whom He is well-pleased. We now have received all the benefits of salvation in Christ. And what we need to recognize is that union has everything to do with the new covenant sign of baptism. That when we stand here on Sundays and someone goes through the waters of baptism, we are putting them in front of you only because God brought them there. They have been met in salvation with a work that is without human hands. That God’s Spirit works through our witness to unite them with Christ in salvation and that baptism reflects that reality.

But notice how he goes on here. Because we’ll see next that baptism is also a new covenant sign of our freedom in Christ. So right there, right in the middle of verse 11, he speaks about how we are putting off the body of the flesh. This term, to put off, means to remove, to strip off, to unclothe. For those of you that like to hunt, it’s like field-dressing an animal. Or maybe you’ve worked in a house where you had to strip a layer of wallpaper before you could repaint it. Or maybe you’ve opened up that gift with excitement on your birthday and torn back the wrapping paper. That’s the picture of putting off that Paul is giving here. But what is this body of the flesh that he speaks of? Well, if you look back one chapter in Colossians, look at Colossians 1:22. That’s the only other place in the New Testament that he speaks about this body of flesh. And he’s speaking about Jesus there and he says this.

²²He has now reconciled you in the body of flesh by His death.

So in other words, here in Colossians 2:11 when Paul refers to the body of flesh, he is talking of the body of Christ. So how is it that Christ puts off this body of flesh? Well, there's a sense in which at His death, there was a shedding of the old self, a shedding of this broken body that is affected by this fallen world and the giving of a new creation body. That it is stripped off so that He can be made new after bearing the weight of our sin. And what Paul is showing us here is the reality that baptism reflects the freedom that we now have in Jesus. That the same work that God did in stripping off the body of the flesh of Christ, He now does for that spiritually. He takes our sinful flesh, our sinful nature. He strips it away. He replaces that heart of stone with a new heart of flesh. And what he is showing us is that if God is powerful enough to overcome the flesh in the life of Christ, He can do that in each one of us. Now Jesus is perfect. He never sinned. But all of us bear the weight of that sin. We feel the guilt and the shame and the difficulties that happen in this broken world. And yet Paul here speaks of the freedom that can be found in Christ alone. A freedom that is captured in the gift of baptism. When I first learned to baptize, I was a college student right here at Central. And I spent a summer up with our friend that came through Central, Kevin Ueckert, out in Abilene when he was pastoring there as a ministry intern. And one day, we took turns baptizing each one another to just learn the mechanics of it. It's true. That's what preachers do. You've got to figure out how to do it. And you'll understand why I needed that practice. Because my first time I got up there and one of the guys was there in the water with me and I was really stately. I raised my hand and I said, "And I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and Jesus Christ." I left the Holy Spirit out of the equation. And there are all sorts of funny moments that can happen backstage before these baptisms. People are nervous, sometimes they forget to hold their nose, I've had situations in my old church where the heater in the baptistery didn't work and they're shivering in the water that's there. But I'll tell you what. I wish every one of you could have the front row seat to that experience that a pastor gets to have. Because there is something magical about plunging someone under the water and you see this water ripple on top of them, washing over their entire body. And it's this amazing picture of what God does for us in the gospel. This freedom that He gives to us. The freedom that can only come by seeing our sins washed away by our faith in Jesus Christ. And that's what Paul is speaking of here. This freedom that we can have in Jesus.

But he also shows us as this verse ends that baptism is a new covenant sign of our victory in Christ. That's why he says there at the end of verse 11,

by the circumcision of Christ.

Now what is the circumcision that he speaks of? It's not Jesus' physical circumcision that happened on the eighth day as a baby. It's the spiritual circumcision that He experienced on the cross as He is separated from God, taking on the penalty of our sin. Paul speaks of it here as a circumcision. But I want you to look at the screen with me and see the way that Jesus talks about it in Luke 12:50. Because what happens is in His death, this is where the covenantal sign of circumcision and the covenantal sign of baptism come together. It's the ending of one chapter and the beginning of the new one. When Jesus says, in Luke 12:50:

⁵⁰I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is My distress until it is accomplished!

In other words, the death of Jesus, which Paul refers to in our passage as a circumcision, Jesus refers to as a baptism. He is fulfilling the old covenant through His death and resurrection and He is inaugurating a new covenant. And in that moment, there are signs of circumcision, signs of baptism that forge themselves together in the victory that God accomplishes in Christ. Baptism reflects the reality that Christ's circumcision on the cross secures the victory of Christ that God brings about in our hearts. That's one of the reasons why, for us at Central, it's such a high priority for our baptism to be celebration moments. In the last few weeks, Miles Lawler, one of our students, got baptized. Jeremy baptized him. And what I loved about it was as he came out of the water, he started pumping his fists in excitement. I love hearing this church clap and whoop. That's the kind of celebration we should have in those moments. Why? Because we are recognizing the victory that God has brought about for us in Jesus. And before we go on in the text, let's get practical here for a minute. I want you to understand how baptism works here at Central. So, what's the process for baptism at our church? When someone comes to know Christ, when they're ready to take that step towards baptism, we invite them to make their way to the front during a Sunday in our response time. Or you'll notice, if you pick up the Connect Card in the seat in front of you, there is a spot there if you fill it out that you can check, I'm interested in being baptized. And what we do when those people come forward to present themselves for baptism is we meet with them. We talk with them. We listen to their story. Especially if they're kids in our Kids Ministry. We have them meet with our Kids Minister, Chris Gary. And we take them and their parents on a process, a journey, to help everybody feel comfortable that there is a genuine decision for faith that occurs. And then on a Sunday, they will come up here and they will go through the waters of baptism. They'll be celebrated in the moment. But one of the new things that I'm excited that we're going to start doing moving forward is starting this Wednesday night at our first Central Celebration service that we're having at 6 P.M. We're not just going to celebrate what God does through this Commitment Sunday through your faithful giving, we're also inviting back those that have been baptized over the last few months. So that we can recognize all of them together. So that we can pray over them collectively as a church. Because we're committing to come along side of them in the journey that God is leading them on. It's one of the reasons why we know our spiritual growth doesn't stop at baptism. It begins there. In our life groups later on today, we will have all of the kids that have made a profession of faith that have been baptized over the last few months in a new kids, new Christian class for kids. Where over the course of four weeks, children like my son Lawson and others will be there learning the first steps of what it looks like to follow Jesus, even at that age. The baptism is the starting point. That's the way the process works here.

But how is it that we do baptism? Different denominations practice things in different ways. So for our family, we grew up with my dad's side our family, primarily catholic. And for them, they're Christened as a child in order to take away their original sins. Maybe some of you grew up in a Protestant denomination where there was a baptism by sprinkling of infants to unite them to the covenant benefits of the people of God. There are other denominations that say baptism is an essential necessity for salvation. What we believe here at Central, coming out of text like Colossians 2 that we're look at this morning, is we believe in believer's baptism. That baptism, if you look at the New Testament, there is a pattern for baptism that it is immersion after conversion. That it's reserved for those who have put their faith in Jesus and it is done by

immersion. Going under the water rather than by sprinkling. In every example that we have in the New Testament, there is an immersion as part of that baptism. In fact, the word baptize in the original language is most literally translated immersion. And so what we hold out to you is that we reserve baptism only for those who have put their faith in Christ as a step to publicly profess their faith and unit themselves with the church of God. So who is it that should be baptized, if that's the case? I've had three adults just in the last month reach out to me saying, "I had some sort of baptism type experience as a child that I'm not sure was a real baptism." Two of them, like some of my family members on my dad's side of the family were christened in the Catholic church. And they recognize now that they didn't have any faith at that point and they realized that they may need to go through baptism now that they trust in Jesus. On the other hand, one of them grew up in a church similar to ours and made a profession of faith as a young child. He walked the aisle, he was baptized in that moment, but he realizes now that even though he went through the mechanics of a proper baptism, he may not have actually had genuine faith in Jesus.

So who is this baptism for? It's for those of you in the room or watching online this morning who have trusted in Christ. You have made your faith your own, but you have not responded in that public profession of faith. Maybe you're a college student or a high school student for who that's true. Maybe you're a child who's sitting next to your parent this morning who needs to tug on their sleeve and tell them, "I'm ready to take this step." But it also can be for those of you who have experienced something like what some of these adults have who had the wrong type of baptism, even though you now have the right type of faith. Where it wasn't upon your profession of faith. It wasn't by immersion and you're ready to take that step. And for others, you might be like one of those adults that I talked about who went through the right type of baptism, just as the wrong time in your life. Where in that moment you went through the right mechanics of the experience and yet your heart didn't genuinely know God. If that's you this morning, we want to invite you to take that step that Paul is laying out here. Because what we're doing with baptism, when you mark that on your Connect Card, when you come forward here in the response time, we are recognizing the way that we've been united to Christ, we have been experienced freedom in Christ, that we have encountered victory in Christ, and we want the world to see that new covenant sign manifested in our life. And when you look back at this text, I want you to see how Paul goes on in the second half of it to show us a different dimension about baptism. That baptism is a sign of our new life in Christ. It's not just a sign of the new covenant, but of our new life. About the inward change that has shaped who we are as believers. And we see that playing out in several ways. He tells us there at the start of verse 12 that the sign of baptism shows us how in our new life we have died with Christ. That's why he says, if you look at verse 12,

¹²having been buried with Him in baptism.

If you look across the Bible, water is a major theme from the very beginning when God creates the waters. To the flood that brings judgment. To the parting of the Red Sea and the crashing of those waters in judgment against the enemies of God. If you read the prophetic writings in the literature of the Old Testament, you can often sense this fear of water, this fear of judgment that's associated with it. And here comes the New Testament. And John baptizes with water, but he's anticipating One who is even greater than him who will baptize with the Spirit. And then as we saw earlier, Jesus speaks of His cross as a baptism. What we need to understand is

that in the act of baptism, there is a judgment that is taking place. That when Jesus stands there on the cross and gives up His life for you and me for our sin, He is going through that baptism, going through the waters of judgment on our behalf so that we might be delivered. And Paul tells us there that we are buried with Him. That we are united to Him in His death. In other words, each Sunday when we take someone through baptism and we lower them down into the waters, what is happening in that moment is we are putting into picture what the Bible puts into words. That we are buried. That we are going down into the grave with Jesus. That we are receiving along with Him the judgment for our sins. But it is not us that is bearing the judgment, but Him and Him alone. That's one of the reasons we do baptism by immersion. It gives us this picture of the fact that we have been buried with Christ. But notice, Paul doesn't stop there. Because he also shows us how the sign of baptism shows how, in our new life, we have been raised with Christ. So look at how he goes on there in verse 12.

¹²In which you were also raised with Him.

There is this picture that, yes, we go through the waters of judgment in baptism to our death, but we are also raised to walk in life. It's as if a new chapter has begun. Cami and I and our boys, we live right by the line between College Station and Bryan on University. And if you can travel down Texas Avenue and see signs that say, Now Entering College Station, if you're heading in one direction. Or, Now Entering Bryan, in another direction. It is a public sign that you are leaving one place and going to another on the journey in which you are travelling. Paul's showing us that baptism functions in a similar way. It is a public sign that we are leaving one thing behind and moving into a new chapter of our life in our spiritual journey because we have been raised with Jesus. And notice the way, if you'll look at the screens, that Paul speaks about this from Romans chapter 6. Another spot where he uses this exact same language. I don't want you to miss this. Romans 6, verses 3 and 4. He helps us make sense of what happens in our new life in Christ when he says,

³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

So why were we buried with Him? So that we might be raised. So that we might walk in newness of life. Can you imagine how many phone calls the paramedics got this week for helping homes all around our city? And I'm sure a number of those were for people who got out on the ice when they shouldn't have and I'm not going to ask you to raise your hands if you fell this week on the ice, I'd have to raise my hand too as part of that. But for some, when they fell, they couldn't get back up on their own. They might have tried repeatedly but they couldn't make it. They needed someone outside of themselves to step in and to provide the stability they couldn't find to raise them up when they couldn't do it on their own strength. That's the picture Paul is giving us here. That we are raised up with Christ. That our baptism reflects it. That the picture that we get of the gospel in baptism isn't just that we are buried with Christ in baptism, but also that we are raised to walk in newness of life. When we bring that person up out of the water, it is symbolizing the sign of this resurrection that God has provided for us. That's why Paul finishes our passage this morning by showing us that the sign of baptism shows how in our

new life we have been saved by faith in Christ. You'll see it there at the end of the verse when he says:

[Through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead.](#)

So how are we saved? How do we experience this spiritual circumcision? How do we experience the new life that's reflected in baptism? Look at what it says. Through faith. It's not the water that saves us in baptism. It's the faith that saves us that baptism now reflects. He is giving us this picture here of a faith and unwavering trust in the provision of God for our spiritual need. And in that moment, look at how he describes what we're placing our faith in. In the powerful working of God. The wonder working power. The kind of power we're going to see described next week when we come back to this chapter and see the way that at the cross Jesus cancels our debt of sin. At the cross Jesus defeats our spiritual enemies. That's the type of power that raises us from the dead. That's the type of power that enables us to put our faith in Jesus. The God who has the power to raise Jesus from the dead in His resurrection has the power to raise you from the dead spiritually in your salvation. That's the type of power that Paul is speaking of here. That's the type of salvation that he is speaking of in this moment. I don't know where this week finds you. Maybe after this week you feel worn down more than anything else. I had one of our members remind me right before we came here that early on in January I said 2021 is looking at 2020 and saying, "Hold my root beer." That was before we knew that a winter storm was coming that would knock out power and do thousands of dollars of damage to your house. I don't know what happened to you this week. But you know what I know? We follow a God that we can trust by faith in His powerful work. That no matter the setbacks you couldn't anticipate, no matter the financial challenges that you or our church face, He is enough to meet us in this moment. While all our eyes were fixed here in the frozen tundra of Texas, eyes around the world were fixed on a place that was even colder than right here. A place where the surface temperature was more than 100 degrees below zero. That was on the surface of Mars. Because 7 months ago NASA launched a rover named Perseverance all the way out into space and this week, through a harrowing 7-minute descent, it landed on the surface of Mars. It entered into the atmosphere at over 12,000 miles an hour. And over the course of those minutes, it reduced its speed to 2 miles an hour in order to come to a rest on a surface that no human has ever seen; no eye has experienced in person. Now imagine if you're one of these NASA officials who is there involved in this launch. You spent years of your life invested in this. You've waited months for this moment and now in these minutes, you don't know what's going to happen. Because this landing is made without human intervention. It's as if it's happening without human hands. And the readouts that you're getting from the instruments, the pictures that are coming back from the rover are on a multiple minute delay. Where by the time it reaches you, by the time you find out that it has arrived, that it is there safely, that event has already occurred. In other words, when they get the good news of a victorious launch, a victorious settling on the surface of Mars, they are celebrating a picture of something that has already happened in the recent past. When we think about the nature of what baptism is, that's the gift that God has given this church. That we have this picture of the recent past. Of this reality that comes about without human hands through the faithful work of God that we now get to see on display as people walk by faith publicly to declare it by going through the waters of baptism all around the world. Even here at churches like Central. Now I remember walking through that lobby with the baptistery in my old church in Midland. Just thinking about the past 30 years. I hadn't been there in 30 years. And I don't know all the journey that church has been

on since then. But what I do know is that the spiritual investment they made in an 8-year-old child at that time is still bearing fruit decades later. And what I know is that behind that spiritual investment was a financial investment from the people of that church to put kids in a position for God to change their life just like God did with me. And that's why it's so fitting that we are reflecting on this reality of baptism as we are now turning our attention to this Commitment Sunday. Who knows what God might do over the next 30 years here at this church because of the financial faithfulness of you all around this room and watching online. That He could use our gifts to provide for our needs so that He can bring about an impact through our ministry. If you remember, a few weeks ago I stood before you and I told you that COVID has had an effect on our giving and our congregation. That we've seen a decline of more than 10% in that time period. Well, since then I've been a part of a survey of the local churches here in the Brazos Valley and almost half of the churches in our community are in the exact same situation. And when I stood before you, we talked through Matthew 6 the way that Jesus confronts our anxieties when it comes to money. And little did we know that at that time, the Commitment Sunday that we announced for last Sunday would be delayed a week because of a historic ice storm that might have caused significant new financial hardship to each one of you. We couldn't have anticipated that. But I'll tell you one thing. God knew that was coming. He's not surprised by that. And in this moment, we get the first chance to put Matthew 6 to the test. Are we going to trust that God is enough? Are we going to believe in His faithfulness, even in the midst of the anxiety that comes with the uncertainty of our finances?

What I want to do now is remind you of what I've already seen over the last few weeks. That you have already begun to step up and give. There are some families in this church giving now for the first time. I heard about one family who's increased their tithe by 50%. Another family where both of the husband and wife work and they were consistently tithing off of one salary, but often forgetting about the other one who are now going to be more faithful in both of those salaries. There's a different story in each family. But at the heart of each of those stories is the same reality. That you are already stepping up to sacrifice for the sake of the gospel. That's why I want to invite you right now, if you've got one of those envelopes in the chair back in front of you to grab it if you don't already have that out. And in just a moment, I'm going to give you a chance with you and your family to prayerfully fill that out. We're going to have some quiet music playing in this time. We're going to ask you to take this step. And what I want you to notice, when you look at these envelopes, is that everybody can participate in this. Because what we want to do is invite you to check as many of the five boxes there as you feel led to. And those final two boxes are related to prayer. Every one of you, even if you're not sure what God would have you do financially in this moment, can commit to pray for our church. And we want to invite you in to that opportunity. So in just a minute, I'm going to pray. We're going to stand and sing our response song as we normally do. But as we do that, I'm going to invite you to take these envelopes that you've just now filled out and to make your way to the tables around the room. We've got tables set up where we normally give the communion elements and you can get those, you can drop those off in the offering plates that are there in that time period. But as you do that, I also want to encourage you to consider coming here to the front and taking a moment to pray at these steps for our church. That God will open up the hands of generosity to provide for us in this time of need. And as we do this, I also want you to know that there are many ways you can respond in this time. You may be hearing this word from the gospel and realize your need of salvation. We can share with you what it looks like to do that. Maybe you are ready to take a step towards baptism. You want to talk to one of our

ministers about that. Maybe your family is ready to join our church in advance of our New Member Workshop today. We can help you get that process started today. But what I want you to do now as we prepare our hearts is to hear this word from Malachi chapter 3 where God speaks of his faithfulness in our giving. And after that to take a moment to fill these envelopes out in your seats. Here's what he says. Malachi 3, verses 10 through 12.

¹⁰Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. ¹¹I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts. ¹²Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts.

So take a moment now and work through these envelopes together and then I'll close us in prayer as we prepare to respond.

Let's pray together now.

Father, we're coming to You asking for You to make a way, asking for You to open up the storehouse of heaven to meet us in this moment to meet our need. And I'm praying Lord that as we respond to Your word in this time that You will pierce our hearts that if there are people that need to follow You in baptism that You will lead them. If there are people that need to follow You in membership that You will lead them. If there are people that need to walk with You in salvation, Lord, that You will set them free so that they can experience the fullness of life in Christ. We ask all these things in Jesus name. Amen.