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ESTHER 5-6

Esther Series

Let's take a moment now and pause before the Lord before we open His word. This is a very sacred moment and I hope you have these kinds of moments outside of Sunday morning where you open God's word. Because when you do, you never know what God might do. It might be today that God prompts you to do something in particular. It might be today that God affirms His love in you in a special way. God's word is living and active and so whenever we open it up this is not just an exercise that we do. This is something alive and active and special. Who knows? We come before the Lord with anticipation.

[PRAYER] Lord, we open our hearts now, ready, removing any other idols that might exist in our lives so that we can hear from you. We ask you to speak through your word, that your Holy Spirit will be the teacher today. We thank you for your grace that you give to us to live each day of our lives. Grow us in that grace today, Lord, as we look at your word and try to understand it more effectively. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Open your Bibles to Esther 4 toward the end of the chapter. That's where we left off last week. In Esther we're learning something very important. We're learning about the providence or the sovereignty of God.

I was counseling this week with a family. The mom in particular is dealing with a teenager who found out about the sovereignty of God and it really crushed her. When the young lady found out that God is in control of everything it hurt her. She didn't know what to do with this. It was really interesting.

Many people come to it the way God designed it – so that we'll put our trust in God and we find great safety in the providence of God. But for her if God fixed everything, it's all set, then for her it was like, "Why should I even try?" Because she misunderstood this.

I really want you to understand this concept as we're going through the book of Esther in this period of time. Because that's what this book is all about. If we understand God's sovereignty and we understand He's in control, then we're able to put our trust in Him and recognize that all of the things that are going on in our lives, all the drama of our particular situation is not outside of God's realm. God is in control, God knows what's going on, and God is at work in the midst of all of that. It's a very important concept that we look at theologically.

Some people when they understand God's providence they say, "Well, why should I even try? Why should I do anything?" If you come to that question it's because you haven't fully

understood another piece of God's teaching and that is the responsibility of man. The person who gets this (and this is like really deep stuff to understand the providence of God and responsibility of man) you can't really understand both of them at the same time; you've got to focus on one or the other usually. But what we do is we serve the Lord with our responsibility of man as much as we can. We're doing everything, we're trying to be as wise as we can, but we're trusting the Lord fully in our lives. God somehow works that out in the midst of things in a way that's really beautiful. I don't even know how to explain it.

I know that when I was in seminary I thought, "I'm going to understand this. I'm going to be able to put the responsibility of man and the sovereignty of God together. I'm going to grasp this." And so I started to try to dig into this and go deep and try to figure it all out. I remember one pastor told me as I was telling him what I was trying to do, "You can go as deep as you want with this subject. Some people go deep, some people go shallow, but we all come up wet." That's the reality. We need to come up wet with both ideas in our mind so that we understand them.

Now today, although the whole book is focused on the sovereignty of God, we're going to see also very heavily the responsibility of man emphasized in our passage with Queen Esther and what she's going to do. Because Queen Esther's now going before the king and she has a plan in mind and some ideas. She's going to respond to events as she goes through. There's wisdom that she's going to put into this. So we're going to see both the responsibility of man and we're going to see the sovereignty of God at work and how God brings it all together. Kind of an exciting part of the story.

We're going to see how Esther approaches the king. Look at Esther 4:15-16 first. *Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."*

What the queen's doing here is she's preparing in three days to go before the king. She's going to bring an appeal to him. This appeal is very important. She knows it and she's preparing herself, but she's also trusting the Lord. Do you see both of these? She's doing all she can and we're going to see some of her wisdom in the process, but she's also saying, "God, we're going to fast for three days, we're going to trust you." Both of those things are at work in her life.

You want to do this in your own life too. You want to work as hard as you can doing what God wants you to do, but you're trusting the Lord at the same time that God is at work inside of this whole situation.

Three days she prepares because she's going to go before the king. You can do all you want humanly speaking, but the king's heart has to change.

It reminds me of the proverb in Proverbs 21:1. It says this: *In the Lord's hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him.*

Let me read that again. Do you see that God is in control of even the authorities in our life? I don't know who the king is in your life that you would put in this place, but when God is in control of that person of authority over you, God is controlling that person's heart, then it's a channel of a stream of water. *In the Lord's hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him.*

So Esther 5:1: *On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall.*

Esther's going to make some choices here. She's going to try to develop the best plan, as you and I must do at the same time. We're developing the best plan we can to approach a challenging situation that's out there. And so we do the best that we can.

You remember Mordecai is outside the king's palace. He has sackcloth and ashes. She could've done that. She could've put on sackcloth. It would've been against the rules inside the palace, but she's breaking the rules anyway by going to the king. She could've chosen sackcloth and ashes; not a bad solution. She doesn't do that. She chooses to put on her nice clothes and stand before the king. She chooses what she's going to wear as part of the deal.

I think that's a matter of wisdom. She knows that her beauty is what attracted the king to her in the first place, so she's going to look nice as she goes before the king. It's an important part of the process. She's going to get dressed up.

Notice it says, *The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance.*

Isn't that interesting? She goes in and the king's there. He's not engaged in some activity. He's sitting in his chair. I don't know what he's doing, probably not reading the sports page or watching TV, but he's there. I don't know what kings do in those days that they would sit in a chair, but he's sitting in this chair.

You might imagine her heart pounding inside because she knows that the law required that she could not go in to the king's presence. She could not do what she's about to do. She's violating the law and the only thing that's going to save her life is if the king holds out his gold scepter and then she's going to touch it and that's going to be the exception that she won't get killed.

Whenever you go in and make an appeal the answer could be no. You have to be ready for a no answer. For us, we go into an authority and appeal and the no answer sometimes that we get may result in disappointment and we have to be ready for that disappointment.

In this case, it's a lot on the line because she could lose her life. She's going in recognizing the risk.

Let's look at verse 2. *When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.*

This is so great because I'm sure we can all tell stories about how this has happened in our own lives. We have a need or a challenge or a problem. We pray, "God, I need your help here. Would you please help solve this problem?" And then what does God do? God opens the door somehow in a way. We prayed, but then He opens the door and we go, "Wow, look at that!" We're almost surprised that He answered our prayer. He opens the door and we go "wow" and we walk through that door not even knowing how to handle the next thing, what to do next, but we're just trusting the Lord. God is opening the door.

I'm sure this was a relief for Queen Esther as she's coming and she's about to make this wise appeal to the authority in her life.

I teach young people, teenagers how to make a wise appeal and encourage parents to teach the wise appeal to their children when they're young. A wise appeal is a way of approaching an authority. There are some people who just do a lot of complaining to authorities. But a wise appeal takes some wisdom in coming to the authority and knowing exactly what to do and how to approach that person.

My daughter, Melissa, sometime ago she grew up with the wise appeal in our home. We taught our kids how to make a wise appeal to us and then they would use it outside the home. When she's an adult, when she was about twenty-six or something like that, she sent me a one sentence email that said, "Dad, I just wanted to let you know that I used the wise appeal with Samaritan's Purse this week." She used to work for Samaritan's Purse. That was her employer at the time. So she used the wise appeal.

The wise appeal is a tool. Esther's using this tool as she comes before the king. I think it's important that we are also practicing and thinking about it because the key word is 'wise.' There's lots of ways to make an appeal. You can complain, you can tattle, you can do all kinds of things. But there's a wise way to make an appeal. Not everybody does that in a wise way.

Verse 3: Then the king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."

Obviously she has found favor in his eyes. He's going to give her half the kingdom if she asks for it. So he's ready to give her what she wants. But she realizes that this is not the best time. She's got an important request to come.

If you're not with us in the story here, you have to realize that what happened in the last chapter is that we've got the villain, Haman, who has got a permission from the king to kill all the Jews. They're going to get killed. So the problem she has is that's her people. She's a Jew, but the king doesn't know she's a Jew. She's got to go in and she's got to go before the king and say, "King, would you change your mind or would you do something about this?"

It's a pretty significant request and she realizes now is not the best time. He says, "I'll give you half the kingdom." He doesn't know what he's talking about. I'm imagining her saying, "I've got to prepare him a little bit." So she's going to help set the stage by building relationship with him.

Building some more relationship. She knows he likes to eat, so she's going to invite him over for dinner.

This is where the wisdom part comes in. We don't just complain about life. We don't just come and say, "Hey, I've got a request." She's going to build relationship first before she goes in.

If you've got a problem at work, you can write it up, stick it on your boss' desk and maybe you'll get a positive response. But you have a greater chance at getting a positive response if you sit down over lunch with the boss and you explain the issue and you talk about it. A relationship becomes part of the solution. Esther knows that; she's bringing this to the table here.

Wisdom is the key. There's a lot of right ways to do things, there's a lot of good ways to do things. But that doesn't mean every good thing is appropriate. We need to have some kind of wisdom as we're moving forward. Often that means that we have to appeal because there's some problem that's going on.

Let me tell you a story about the wise appeal with my son, Josh. When Josh graduated from home school he went to Bible college. When he went to Bible college at Calvary Chapel Bible College in Murrieta, California, in his freshman year there in about December he contacts me, he calls me on the phone, and says, "Dad, you're not going to believe these people here. They don't have community service going on. They don't have the students doing anything in the community. If Jesus were running this Bible college He'd have the students out in the community."

I said to Josh, "Well, Josh. That's a good point. It sounds like you see a problem there. Maybe you ought to write it up like a wise appeal and take it in to the leadership of the school." So Josh wrote up this three page wise appeal, a proposal. He sent it to me and I edited it for him and sent it back to him. Then he went in to the president of the Bible college and said to the president of the Bible college, "I think this is the next step for the school."

The president read his three page wise appeal and he said to him, "Do you think you could come and talk to the faculty at the faculty meeting next week?" So Josh went in to the faculty meeting. They asked him to speak to the student body after the first of the year in that winter term, which he did, about service and the importance of service. When he went home for the summer they asked him to come back two weeks early and set up a pilot program for community service for the students, which he had. He ran it as a student, he ran a community service program for the school. It was a voluntary program.

When he graduated from that school, they hired him on because "this guy knows what he's doing." They bring him on; he becomes a part of the staff there. One of his tasks at the school was every senior had to have some kind of a service project managed by Josh's card file that he had. He had jobs that if you like people, you could work at the adoption resource center at the prison. If you didn't like working with people, you were wanting to work with things, then you could do some painting projects in the community, you could pick up litter on the side of the road. They had all these jobs that you could do.

Josh worked himself into a job because he had an appeal. It's the way that we come sometimes to the situation that allows us to get a positive response.

So this is what Esther says in verse 4. *"If it pleases the king," replied Esther, "let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him."* Let's have dinner together. Let's do that.

Verse 5: *"Bring Haman at once," the king said, "so that we may do what Esther asks."*

So they go and eat at Queen Esther's place. *So the king and Haman (verse 5) went to the banquet Esther had prepared. As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, "Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."*

The king offers a second time and the queen now is not going to give her question. She's still not going to ask. She knows that this is going to be the most difficult question that she's going to ask the king. Haman is the villain, Haman is the king's friend, and she's going to reveal the plot, she's going to share the problem, and she knows it's going to be really tough. So she doesn't even answer the king and give him the request yet.

Verse 7: *Esther replied, "My petition and my request is this: If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question."*

She takes a risk. The king could say, "Don't play games with me. Tell me now." But she uses a concept to prepare him a little bit more; timing and anticipation.

Sometimes as we're working with other people we don't consider the timing. We see something and we just react to it. When we do parenting I call that reactive parenting. You see something and you just yell about it. We're talking about being more strategic here in the way that we're working with people.

Esther's going to use this idea of anticipation. I encourage parents to do this. I say, "Look. You're having a problem, a challenge with your child and you're going to talk to your child about it. Here's what you do. In the afternoon, you say, 'I'd like to meet with you this evening at seven o'clock because I have something important that I want to talk to you about. Not your brothers and sisters, just you. You and I are going to meet this evening.' And your child goes, 'Okay.' Because now you've added anticipation to the process and it raises the value level." Right?

That's exactly what Esther's doing. The wisdom in knowing how to appeal moves Esther's request, humanly speaking, into a greater chance of being accepted. Obviously God is at work. We're going to talk about God's providence in a minute, but humanly speaking, Esther's doing something here that's strategic.

It reminds me of Joseph. Joseph in the Old Testament is the one who God came to him a dream about how he was going to move forward. God then used dreams and he would interpret them. And he goes before the king and he says to the king, "I'll tell you what your dream means that these seven lean cows eat up the seven fat cows. I'll tell you what that means. What that means is that you're going to have a time of great prosperity. Lots of grain is going to come in and then you're going to have seven years of famine. I'll tell you what you should do." He offers a solution like the wise appeal. "Find yourself someone who can manage your kingdom in a way that collects all of that grain, puts it into storehouses for the first seven years so that in the second seven years during the famine you'll be able to distribute, you'll have all the grain." The king says, "I know just the man." It was Joseph. "I'm going to choose you."

Daniel, remember, he had a wise appeal that he took before the king. In Daniel 1, all this food is spread out and it says of Daniel *he determined in his heart that he would not eat the king's food*. But then what does he do? Does he go to the king's servant and say, "I'm not eating that stuff." No. He doesn't just react, he goes with a wise appeal. "Hey, I've got an idea for you guys. Let's have a test for ten days. Let's see if we have people just eating vegetables; you guys can eat the rest. Let's see who does better during that period of time." He brings a solution to the situation. There's wisdom involved in that.

That's what Esther's bringing to this particular situation. She doesn't just tattle on Haman. "I've got to tell you what Haman's doing!" She doesn't do that. She comes with a wise appeal and she prepares well. She gets dressed up, she prepares a banquet, she sets the stage for all that's going to happen.

Frankly, I just want to suggest that sometimes with a wise appeal we can change the world. The way that we bring that appeal is strategic. You can change your world often if you have a wise appeal. That's exactly what's going to happen in this situation.

Well, we have to wait another day because they're going to come to the banquet the next day. Meanwhile, the events continue to unfold. So we have a 24-hour period of time as the events continue to unfold. This is what it looks like.

Verse 9: Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. He's so excited. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai. Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home.

He restrained himself outwardly so other people couldn't see it, but inside he had this rage going on. We can learn something from Haman. He's annoyed at first and that annoyance turns into an internal anger that turns into a bitterness, he wants revenge. It can happen to any of us. We have to be careful about that. That's what's happening.

Let's go on. Verse 10: *Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. "And that's not all," Haman added. "I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has*

invited me along with the king tomorrow. But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate."

See, Mordecai would not bow down. He had convictions as we saw in the Ten Commandments today in Exodus 20. Don't bow down. You don't bow down to anything else. So Mordecai says, "I'm not going to do that. I have convictions." That really bothered Haman because he liked to have praise. So he goes to his wife and all these other friends of his as counselors.

I think it's really wise for any person to have counselors. "I'm thinking about making an important decision. I just wanted to see if you have any thoughts about this. This is what I'm thinking about doing." Or "I've got a problem. Do you have any ideas about this?" Having some people that are key people in your life that know you, that you can come before them and say, "Here's what I'm thinking about doing. What do you think?" can be really helpful. But who we choose to be those counselors is important. Haman does not choose people who are very wise.

Here's their advice in verse 14. *His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him (here's the idea), "Have a pole set up, reaching to a height of fifty cubits (each cubit is eighteen inches, so that's seventy-five feet), and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai impaled on it. Then go with the king to the banquet and enjoy yourself."* This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the pole set up.

God is preparing the scene. Here are all the factors involved in the scene as the story unfolds and then we come to the trigger point. We're going to talk about that in a minute in chapter 6. But here it is. God is preparing the scene. In one we have the conviction of Mordecai that he's not going to bow down. Next we have the anger of Haman. That's an important part of this story. The attention of Esther to Haman and to the king in the midst of this for asking for a decision. The bad advice of the counselors. All this is going to play together.

Now comes the tipping point as we enter chapter 6. It's the last piece and when this piece comes in, the whole things starts to unfold. It all starts to happen.

Esther 6:1: *That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him.* If you remember back in chapter 2, Mordecai saved the king's life. The Bible tells us it was written in these chronicles, but he was never rewarded for it. So there's an unrealized debt that's owed to Mordecai from the king. He doesn't realize it, but now he's going to find out and he's going to find out because he couldn't sleep. He wakes up in the night.

It's interesting to me how often God works in the night. I don't know if He works in the night in your life, but he does in my life. Sometimes I'm laying in bed and wake up in the night and God gives me an idea or gives me a passion or gives me a conviction or He gives me something in the middle of the night.

We see that God works in the night in a number of people's lives. Jacob in the Old Testament, remember, he went to sleep that night and he saw this ladder and God ended up confirming the covenant with him. God works in the night. He's working in the night in the heart of this king.

So the king says, “I can’t sleep. I want a bedtime story. I’d like to hear more about my kingdom and what’s going on. Bring me somebody to read all this.” They’re going through this and as they’re going through it, they start reading all of this and in verse 2 it says, *It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes.*

The king’s saying, “Oh yeah! I forgot about that. That’s right.” Verse 3: *“What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?” the king asked.*

“Nothing has been done for him,” his attendants answered. So he’s going through his thing and he’s thinking, “Oh, there’s a to-do list thing I haven’t completed.” In the middle of the night God reveals “Oh, you know what? I should’ve done something. I got distracted. I didn’t finish that. I need to do something about it.”

By now it must be morning because as the story continues in verse 4 it says, *The king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about impaling Mordecai on the pole he had set up for him. This is bizarre. His attendants answered, “Haman is standing in the court.”*

“Bring him in,” the king ordered. When Haman entered, the king asked him, “What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?”

Now Haman thought to himself, “Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?” So he answered the king, “For the man the king delights to honor, have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king’s most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, ‘This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!’”

Can you imagine? This is so bizarre, an ironic turn of events that’s about to take place. The king asked Haman a question. “Hey, I want to honor somebody. What do you think I should do? How do you think I should honor the person?”

Haman thinks about himself only. He thinks, “It must be me. Let me tell you, this is the kind of honor I’d like. Nice horse, choose a great noble to lead me through the street.” That’s what he’s saying. He’s imagining himself riding on this horse.

It’s just so interesting because now in verse 10 we have the clincher. *“Go at once,” the king commanded Haman. “Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king’s gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended.”*

I just cannot imagine what Haman must have thought in that moment. It’s such an intriguing story. At that moment he must’ve first been dumbfounded, like, “What did you say?!” He must have been so shocked. And then he must not have only been disappointed, but now I bet you he’s scared to death about what’s going to happen.

He hides all that, apparently. Verse 11 says, *So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!"* Wow.

Of course Haman does his job as he was asked. But he is an emotional wreck. I'm telling you, you can tell by the next verse he is an emotional wreck. Notice what it says, verse 12. *Afterward Mordecai returned to the king's gate.* In other words, for Mordecai he goes back to business as usual. The city gate was the business area. Mordecai was one of the king's officials. He goes back and he's working at the king's gate. It's not that big of a deal for Mordecai; it's business as usual. *But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief, and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him.*

"How were things at the office today, honey?"

"You're not going to believe this! I am in BTT!" Do you know what that means? That means big time trouble.

His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him—you will surely come to ruin!" Even the worst counselors get it right sometimes. *While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.*

Oh yeah! I forgot we have to go to dinner tonight. So he's going to this dinner now that Esther had prepared. You've got to be kidding me. This is a really bizarre story. It's no wonder the Jews today celebrate this because God is orchestrating all the events to come together in a special way and there's so many pieces that it just keeps unfolding through the whole story.

We're going to stop here today. You're going, "Oh no! Tell me the rest!" Well, the good thing is this isn't like a TV episode; you can read it yourself! Go ahead and read it. This is a great story. Read chapter 7 on to the end of the book. It'll take you probably five minutes to read the end of the story. We're going to take some time and apply it to our lives next week.

I just want you to see the beauty of the fact that God is in control. I would say that each one of us could tell about the drama going on in our lives. We all have drama going on and the drama's unfolding. We all need to be drawn back to the reality that God is in control. Sometimes it feels like He's sleeping. Sometimes it feels like He's gone away on a trip. But God is in control. We don't always get to see everything that's happening, but God is working in the midst of that and that draws us.

When we realize that God's sovereignty is present it draws us to surrender our lives to God. It draws us to give our hearts to Him. It draws us to trust Him. It should draw us closer, not push us further away. It should draw us close to Him and say, "God, I need you in this moment. I need all that you are in my life. I want to be close to you. I want to enjoy who you are in the moment, not just when things get better. Right now I need you." God does that in the midst of the drama of our lives.

If you're here today and you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I've got to tell you, God created you, He designed you, and He wants to reign in your life. He's a jealous God. He wants to be the Lord. That's what the word 'lord' means. He wants to be the boss of your life.

When you say to God, "God, I know I need you. I'm a sinner. I don't deserve anything from you. I'm grateful that you gave your Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for me. I accept that into my life. I want you to control me," then you become a Christian. Then you get saved. And then you understand the beauty of the unfolding of God's grace in some new ways that maybe you never saw before. God is working each step of the path. It's a beautiful thing.

In the midst of that then you just surrender your life to God and allow Him to do that deeper work. And we draw close to God. In the midst of that then we're drawing closer to Him. I think that should be our prayer. We're coming before the Lord and saying, "God, I want to draw close to you."

In just a moment we're going to sing a couple worship songs. I'm going to ask our counselors to go to the sides so that while we're singing if God is speaking to you and saying, "You need to look at this a different way. You need to come before me and trust me in the midst of this," just take some time and go get some prayer from our counselors.

If you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, now is the time to make the decision, "Yes, I want Jesus in my life. I want to trust Him with my whole heart." Spend some time with those counselors. Allow them to come before God on your behalf as you come before the Lord as well.

We want to dedicate ourselves to the Lord, so let's just pause for a moment in the midst of this story and surrender our hearts to the Lord.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we do want to acknowledge that you're in control. It's sometimes hard to see all of that in our lives. But right now in this moment we surrender ourselves to you and ask that in the midst of the challenges, the drama, the difficulties that we experience, you are present and we need you. So we give ourselves to you. In Jesus' name, amen.