

At the Cross Luke

by Anton Bosch

This sermon delves into Luke chapter 23, focusing on the crucifixion of Jesus. It explores the various responses to Jesus' sacrifice, from mourning to mockery, and emphasizes Jesus' compassion and forgiveness even in the midst of extreme suffering. The sermon challenges listeners to reflect on their own response to the cross and the profound impact of Jesus' sacrifice on their lives.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:12, Luke 23:34, Luke 9:23, John 19:23, Luke 23:39

Description

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Transcript

All right, Luke chapter 23, as we continue our study on the Gospel of Luke, we have two more chapters, and we're in chapter 23 dealing with the crucifixion. And we'll read verses 26 through 38. So Luke chapter 23, reading 26 through 38.

Luke chapter 23, verse 26, now, as they led him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid a cross that he might bear it after Jesus. And a great multitude of the people followed him, and women who also mourned and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children, for indeed the days are coming in which they will say, Blessed are the barren wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed.

Then they will begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and on the hills cover us. For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry? There were also two others, criminals, led with him to be put to death. And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

Then Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. And they divided his garments and cast lots, and the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with him sneered, saying, He saved others, let him save himself if he is the Christ, the chosen of God.

The soldiers also mocked him, coming and offering him sour wine, and saying, If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself. And an inscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. This is the king of the Jews.

And so, after the various mock trials, Jesus has now been scourged, Luke doesn't go into those details, and remember we've said before that the Scripture really draws a veil over the details of the suffering of the Lord Jesus, the details of the beating that he received, and the details of the crucifixion itself. And I believe that we need to respect that veil. I know that some preachers seem to take some kind of macabre pleasure in speaking about the blood, and speaking about the—and I'm not meaning the blood of Christ in its atoning work, but the gore and the gruesomeness of what was happening here.

And yet the Scripture does not tell us, except there's just the odd little statement, like the book of Isaiah, that says that his face was marred more than any man. And so, he was completely disfigured by the things that he had experienced at the whipping post, and that he now will experience at the cross. The reason why I believe the Scripture draws a veil over that is because it's easy for us to get involved in the gruesome details, and to miss the point, to miss the message that it is presenting.

Some people have made movies about this, and taken great delight in trying to really dramatize all of this. For at the end of the day, this is a somber moment, as Jesus, the Son of God, bears the sin of the world. And while we don't want to, in any way, minimize or make nothing the suffering that he endured, at the same time, there are greater issues.

And it's important as we read Luke, and as we read this passage, to note that the focus is not so much on Jesus on the cross, but on those that were surrounding the cross. Their response to what was happening. And when we talk about the cross, and we talk about the suffering, it's easy for us to get involved in the pictures, and the graphics, and the images, and the blood, and the gore, and all of this stuff.

And in the process, deflect from what God is calling us to, and the response that he requires from us. And so, it's interesting that Luke focuses on those who were surrounding the cross, and their response to what was happening. At the end of the day, I suppose that 70% of Americans believe that Jesus died on the cross.

But how do they respond to that? What is their reaction to that? Does it result in a love of the Savior, an acceptance of his sacrifice? Or is it just a fact, and particularly in the time in which we're living, in which video games, and videos containing blood, and guts, and gore, and all sorts of terrible stuff has become the popular form of entertainment, to the degree that people are making movies about the cross, and about the suffering of the Savior. Folks, this is not entertainment. And let me just sound a warning that if you or your kids find some kind of perverse pleasure in these dark videos, and dark movies, and games that speak of violence, and the shedding of blood, and all this stuff, there is something seriously wrong with our culture.

And there was something seriously wrong with this culture, because you'll see that people had different responses, and to many, this was a blood sport. When I read the martyrs, I'm just shocked by the crowds that would come out to watch a man burn in the flames. Not because they were mourning for him, or because they felt for him, but because it was entertainment.

And folks, the cross can never be entertainment. It is the most somber, the most serious moment in all of eternity. There is nothing in all of eternity that can compare with these moments as Jesus hangs upon the

cross of Calvary.

And so as we turn to the text then, it says that as they led him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon the Cyrenian. Now, it was required of the condemned man to carry his cross from the town, or from the city, to the place of crucifixion. The culture, or the tradition was that he would be crucified outside of the city, particularly in Israel, in order to not contaminate the city with the blood of the executed.

And so he would be crucified outside, and he would have to carry maybe his cross, or maybe the cross beam. It seems more likely it was the cross beam that he would carry. There are different methods of crucifixion that was applied, and I'm not going to get into those kinds of details.

But Jesus has to now carry his cross. And he cannot carry it, because he has already been emaciated, he's already been beaten just about to death. And he stumbles under the weight of the cross.

And so the soldiers, obviously it doesn't say who it is, but obviously the soldiers, because there's a detachment of soldiers whose job it is to carry out the execution. And so they laid hold, it says, of a certain man, Simon, a Cyrenian. So he was a man from North Africa, probably a black man, and he comes from what today is Libya, where the infamous Gaddafi ruled.

So if you knew about Gaddafi, you know where Libya is, up in the north of Africa. So he'd come from there, he is clearly a believer in the Jewish sense. He had come for the feast, for the Passover.

And so he is coming into the city, it's very specific that he is coming from the country into the city, and they laid the burden on him. I don't think that there's a message in the fact that he was a man from Africa. I don't think that there may have been some prejudice in the part of the soldiers to choose the black man rather than somebody else.

But I don't believe the Scripture is making a point about that. Again, we can get into these little details and miss the point. The point is this man is pressed into the duty of carrying the cross of the Lord Jesus.

And so he was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus. Luke adds just a little detail which is very, very important. It says they laid the cross on him that he might bear it after Jesus.

So, he is following Jesus, carrying his cross, Jesus the condemned is going in front of him. And of course, this reminds us of the fact that Jesus said in Luke 9.23, If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. And so Simon is fulfilling what Jesus had said.

I believe that Simon became a believer, and I'll give you the reasons for that in a moment. But here's a graphic illustration of what Jesus had taught. In fact, he had taught it twice in Mark 15.21, and they, sorry, I didn't give you the other one, but in Mark, I think it's 20, in Luke chapter 22, Jesus says the same words, basically the same words.

If you want to follow me, you need to take up your cross and follow me. Now we've spoken about that. I'm not going to go into greater detail.

But there's a need for us to take up our cross, not Jesus' cross, but our cross, and to follow him. And of course, the cross was the mark of a man who was condemned. Simon was not condemned.

He had just been pressed into duty to carry the cross. But when we carry our cross, it's a sign that we are condemned, that we are, that we have crucified with Christ, that we have died to ourselves, and we're now following him. And of course, this is an area where there's a great difficulty in the modern versions of the gospel, because the modern versions of the gospel speak about the great benefits of becoming a Christian, and never speak about the responsibilities of laying down our lives for Christ, and carrying our cross, and following him.

And clearly, in following him, when Jesus says in Luke 9, take up his cross daily and follow me, where was Simon following Jesus? He was following Jesus to the cross, to the place of crucifixion. And so, the willingness to follow the Lord, even to death. And again, as I've said, as you read about the martyrs, and they keep impressing upon me the fickleness of our modern faith, the ease with which we want to serve the Lord.

And yet, when you read about these men being willing to literally follow the Lord Jesus to the cross, to the burning pyre, and to be burnt, or to be executed in some gruesome ways for the sake of the gospel—remember, that was the case with most of the apostles. That was the case with Paul. All of them lay down their lives, except John, as far as we know, lay down their lives, literally, for the gospel.

And yet, when the Lord calls on us to make small sacrifices, it's hard to make even the smallest sacrifice. And so, Simon carries the cross, and if we go to Mark chapter 15, they compelled a certain man—so this is Mark's version of the same event—Simon the Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by to bear his cross. So Mark says he is the father of Alexander and Rufus.

What does that mean? It means that the readers that time knew Alexander and Rufus. How would they know them? They would only know them, really, if they were either important figures in government, or if they were believers, if they were Christians. So what I have no doubt about is that Simon's sons become Christians.

And in fact, there's a reference in Paul's letter to the Romans in chapter 16 to Rufus as well. Now, we're not sure that that is the same Rufus, but from this statement it's clear that Simon's sons became Christians, and then I can assume then that Simon had become a Christian as a result of what he experienced on that particular day. All right, so in verse 27, back in Luke 23, "...and a great multitude of the people followed him, and women also mourned and lamented him." I wondered about the multitude.

Remember we've come across the multitude now in two different contexts up to now. There's the multitude who followed Jesus effectively from Galilee and had gone all the way down to Jerusalem, and they were there in the temple courts every day listening to Jesus preach. Then there's the multitude that cry, crucify him, give us Barabbas.

I believe it's the same multitude. Obviously there may have been some folk who've been added and others that have been deleted, but the bulk were the same people. I have to assume that this is the same crowd of people, and again we don't know what a multitude is.

All we know is it's a lot of people, and so why are they there? Why are they following him? Well, clearly most of them had turned against him. Some were still believing, as we see in the book of Acts, but the majority had turned against him. So some had come to see whether maybe he would show his hand that he indeed is the Messiah and he would come down from the cross and perform some great miracle or

whatever.

Others had just come for the spectacle and for the blood and to come and see this crucifixion. Others were in neutral territory, I'm sure. They couldn't make up their minds because they had heard Jesus preach, they had seen him heal the sick, they had been blessed and ministered to by him, and yet at the same time they had been convinced by the leaders of the Jews that he was an imposter and that he was worthy of death.

And so they were there for different reasons. Some had actually come to mock and to scoff at him. But then it says that women also mourned and lamented him.

I don't believe that these women were personally connected to Jesus. It's hard to say, but we know that when Jesus is finally crucified, his mother is there and there's a number of other women who are there at the foot of the cross because of Jesus. But it seems from the way that the language is in these texts that these are just women who were possibly professional mourners.

Remember we've come across these people before, the widow who buried her son, and there's this crowd of people and they're paid to come and mourn. And so they may be professional mourners who are there just to cry and put up a show. And of course, that seems foreign to us, and yet that was really a part of the culture.

There may have been some sympathy on their part for the crucified, not because he was Jesus, but simply because of the grossness of this event. But they're there and they're mourning. And it doesn't seem that Jesus is approving of their mourning because he turns and he addresses them, as we'll see in a moment.

So I don't think that they're there for the right reasons. They're there for some other reason. But Jesus turning to them, and of course, I think that one of the things that stands out in this passage is Jesus' focus on everybody else except himself.

Because over and over, we have to understand that at this point, he is in extreme pain. He is facing the cup of not just the pain of dying in this most terrible way of the cross. He is facing the shame of being made, of being hung on a tree, hung on a cross, which signified that God had turned against him.

He was facing, more than everything, the sin of the whole world. I think that those things must have been overwhelming. Of course they're overwhelming.

I can't imagine myself being in that kind of situation and not being overwhelmed by what I was dealing with, just trying to put one foot ahead of the other, going to this terrible event. And yet Jesus has time and thought and energy for others around him. Sometimes we get so involved in our own little issues that they overwhelm everything else, and we don't understand that there are others who have oftentimes greater problems than we have.

And yet Jesus, in the midst of all of this, and we'll see that again, even as he's on the cross, his concern for his mother, his concern for those who had sinned, his concern for others, goes all the way to the point of death. And, folk, I believe that in that is a lesson of God's immense grace towards us, that he doesn't do what he wants to do. He doesn't seek his own.

He doesn't put his own comforts—and we can hardly speak of comfort in this context. Ahead. But his concern is always for us, the grace of God.

And so he turns to them, and he says, daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. Now that must have been quite a shock to them, because they're putting on the show, and they're really weeping for Jesus, and Jesus says, no, I'm not the one you need to feel sorry for. You need to feel sorry for yourselves, and you need to feel sorry for your children.

And here's the reason. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed. Now remember that in Jewish culture, and particularly in the Old Testament, barrenness was seen as a curse.

It was seen as a terrible burden. Remember, there were a number of women in the Old Testament who were barren, and whose wombs were opened, and they bore children later on. But this was seen to be a curse, and yet Jesus is saying, what up to now was seen as a curse is going to be—you need to see it as a blessing.

Of course it's not a blessing, but he says, the women who don't have children will be better off because of the things that are about to happen. And so, blessed are you who don't have children, and sometimes I wonder whether that doesn't apply to us today. And then they will begin to say to the mountains, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us.

For if they do these things in the greenwood, what will be done in the dry? So what is Jesus talking about? He's talking about the destruction of Jerusalem that would happen in 40 years from that point. And so maybe these women would not experience it, but their children certainly would experience the most terrible attack against Israel as the far right in the Jewish community rebel against Rome, and Rome comes down and smashes the nation and besieges the city. There's a tremendous famine inside of the city for a long time.

Some of them flee up to Masada, and there they hold up, and eventually they commit suicide as the Romans build a ramp up against the mountain and begin to attack them. And so thousands and thousands are killed. The nation is destroyed, never to be reunited again until 1948.

For 2,000 years the nation would be destroyed, the city destroyed, the temple gone, sacrifice gone, everything would be gone, everything destroyed. And Jesus is saying, what's happening today will result in that. God's judgment on Israel for their rejection of the Messiah.

Now, I know some people will say, well, that's anti-Semitic. No, that's just the truth. I love the people of Israel.

I love the Jews. I want them to be saved. As Paul says, he says, I will count myself accursed if Israel can be saved.

But the problem is that there are consequences to disobedience. There are consequences to God having pleaded with Israel, prophet after prophet after prophet, for hundreds and thousands of years, all the way back from Abraham. When the nation began, God is reaching out his hands to Israel, and Israel rejects God and eventually kills his son.

And Jesus says, here's what's going to happen. You're going to cry for the mountains to fall on you and for the hills to cover you because it's going to be that bad. Now, of course, there is a reference to the second coming as well, but I'm not going to get into that.

Remember, that prophecy always has a number and multiple fulfillments, and this will become true again at the end of the Great Tribulation, at the end of time. And so, then he says this strange thing, which we have difficulty in understanding sometimes. For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry? Now, clearly he is speaking of himself as the green wood, and he's speaking of Israel as the dry.

He is speaking about judgment, if these things, these things, the judgment that Jesus is about to bear on the cross of Calvary, the judgment that will come on Israel in AD 70. So he's speaking about judgment, and he's saying, if the green wood—in other words, if you're going to burn a living tree, and if a living tree can be burnt, how much more does a dead tree not burn? And we live in fire area, we know how this works. We know that if there's dry brush, it's kindling, and it just burns easily.

If it's a living green tree, it's harder for that to burn. And Jesus is just using the common argument of going from the lesser to the greater, and he's saying, if I, who am righteous, if this is happening to me, what's going to happen to you? I am the living Son of God. You are the dead Israel.

Remember that John the Baptist already had prophesied and said that the axe is laid to the root of the tree, and it's about to be chopped out. Jesus spoke many times concerning Israel, of the tree that doesn't bear fruit, that will be hewn out and will be cut out and be thrown away. And so this is a picture then of Jesus and Israel, and he's saying, if the judgment fell on me, then what judgment will fall on you? And that's simply the statement that he is making.

Then it says there were also two others, criminals, led with him to be put to death. Now we don't know much about these other two men. Unfortunately, in Christian tradition, people have given them names.

We don't know their names. I don't know that, and in fact, there are two different sets of names, depending on what Christian tradition you're from. I don't believe their names are important.

It simply says they were criminals. It is very likely that they were gang members with Barabbas. Because remember that Barabbas had caused an insurrection and he had murdered.

And the language that's used concerning their name may speak of insurrectionists, rebels, who had stood up against Rome. Be it as it may, they were condemned, they were criminals, and one of them, you remember, you'll see it later on, but one of them says, we're here for the right reason. We deserve what we're getting.

So at least one of them admitted guilt and said, yeah, we're bad dudes. We deserved what we're getting. And so they were bad.

And of course, Jesus is led with them. And it's interesting. Why is Jesus not crucified alone, if this is such a significant thing? And just by the way, let me just take a diversion here.

That in much of our Christian icons and pictures, we have the three crosses. And you know, it makes a pretty picture. But I don't believe that it's a good picture.

Because the emphasis is not on the other two crosses. There's only one cross that matters. Their crosses did not matter at all.

And I'm not saying that they didn't matter, but of course, you know, there was only one thing that was the issue on that day, and that was the price that Jesus is paying for our sins. And the fact that there were others crucified with him, they are just part of the bigger picture, as we'll see in a moment. And the bigger picture is that he is counted amongst the criminals.

So he is just thrown in there together with the rest of the criminals, together with the other two. The fact that he is crucified on the center cross seems to indicate that he is regarded as the chiefest of sinners, as the leader of the gang. Remember that Barabbas had been set free.

Barabbas had been condemned. And Barabbas probably would have been on that center cross, together with his cohorts. And yet Jesus takes his place, as we saw last week.

And so Jesus becomes the chief, chiefest of sinners. Of course, Jesus himself never sinned. We always need to emphasize that, because there's a wrong teaching that says Jesus became a sinner.

No, he is regarded, he is counted as a sinner, the same way as God counts his righteousness to us, even though we don't deserve to be called righteous. And so he is given that place as being the biggest criminal of them all. And so two others, criminals, led with him to be put to death.

And when they came to the place called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Now remember that Luke is sparse on the details. Luke doesn't cover a lot of the details that the other gospel writers cover.

And yet at the same time, he inserts things that are important. And he's very economical with his words, even though it's the longest gospel. The fact that he specifies, he doesn't just say he was led, as we saw in the previous verse, to be crucified with the two, but now he specifies that one is on the right, one is on the left.

And again, saying Jesus is the chiefest. But again, the focus is on those around him and their responses to the Lord Jesus. And then he says, sorry, I'm going back to Luke chapter 22, the previous chapter, Jesus had prophesied.

He says, for I say to you, that which is written must still be accomplished in me. And he was numbered with the transgressors. For the things concerning me have an end.

He was numbered with the transgressors. And of course, you should recognize that that's a quote from Isaiah chapter 53. And so in Isaiah 53, therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, the last verse of the chapter, and he shall divide the spoiled with the strong, because he poured out his soul unto death.

He is numbered with the transgressors, and he bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. And so Jesus is counted as a sinner, counted as just a common criminal, together with the rest of them. And so Jesus fulfills the scripture.

Now, again, you can see one of the other reasons why Luke mentions and specifies these other two, when in fact Luke omits a lot of the other details, because everything is happening according to the word of God. Everything is being fulfilled. Whoever made the decision, I don't know whether that was Pilate's decision,

or whether it was the Roman centurion, or some other Roman official who made the decision that these two men had to be crucified with Jesus.

They did not know the scriptures. They did not know they were going to fulfill the scriptures when they crucified these two men with Jesus. Again, we can see clearly that these things are not happening by chance.

They are not random things, but they are happening step by step, as God had prophesied through Isaiah from the very beginning. And so Jesus is crucified, and again, Luke doesn't tell us the details. He's now on the cross, he's hanging, and he's busy dying.

And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. And they divided his garments, and they cast lots. I'm not sure who Jesus was referring to.

Some people say he was referring to the soldiers, and there were at least four soldiers who had the job of crucifying him. There could have been more. Is he speaking about them? Is he speaking about the crowd? Well, I don't think it matters, because as we've seen in the past, that all of them were complicit.

Every one of them was guilty of his crucifixion, the Jews and the Romans. And yet Jesus says, Father, forgive them. Now, we need to remember that this does not impart to them salvation.

The problem is, the moment we see this word forgive, we jump to a conclusion, we say, well, they were saved. No, he's not asking for forgiveness for their sinful lifestyle or their lives. He's asking for forgiveness for the act of what they are doing.

One of the reasons why some believe he's only referring to the Romans is because the Jews knew what they were doing. And notice he says, they do not know what they're doing. And so maybe this does apply to the Romans.

It doesn't matter. The fact is that Jesus is looking beyond himself again, and he's concerned for others, even those who were mistreating him, even those who were crucifying him in this cruel, wicked way. He is looking at them, and he's saying, Father, I have pity for them.

Remember it speaks elsewhere of the Lord Jesus that he looked at Israel and says he was moved with compassion for them, because they were a sheep without a shepherd. And so Jesus, again, in the most desperate moment of anyone's life, is concerned about others. And again, of course, it's a lesson to us to look beyond our own discomfort, our own issues, and to recognize that there are others around us who have needs, and what these people needed, it seems, was forgiveness for this particular act.

They would still be accountable for the rest of their lives, for the rest of the way that they lived. The way they lived the rest of their lives, they would still have to give an account for that. And then it says, and they divided his garments, and they cast lots.

Remember that the other gospel writers tell us that when they came to his cloak, it was woven in one piece, and so it seemed to be a waste to rip it into four pieces if there were four soldiers. And so instead of ripping it apart, they divided the rest of the stuff out, and so they cast lots for this garment, again, fulfilling the scriptures from the Old Testament. But I think that, again, we see the contrast between Jesus dying for the sins of the world, and yet he's concerned for the mothers of Israel.

He's concerned for the other thief on the cross. He's concerned for his own mother, who would now not have a means of support. He is concerned about those who were mistreating him, and he asked for forgiveness for them.

But the Roman soldiers, they're just playing games. And folk, isn't that a picture of where we're at today? The world is just playing its games, gambling, doing this, doing that, unconcerned that the Savior died, and that he died for them. I don't think that these guys were a hundred miles away from where this was happening.

They're literally at the foot of the cross. They're there to guard, lest anyone save these people and get them off the crosses and try and resuscitate them. So they're right there at the foot of the cross, the most, as I said earlier, the most momentous moment in all of eternity.

And yet they're playing games, casting lots, whatever shape or form that took, pulling straws or I don't know what, how they did it. Folk, maybe we're all Christians this morning, and yet sometimes we can be so unmoved by the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. Just concerned about maybe I can score one here.

Maybe I can win a garment that's worth a few pennies. If only they could look up and see the Savior. Remember that one of them does look up, and he sees something that was unique, and he recognizes that Jesus was more than what they thought he was.

And the people stood looking on, but even the rulers were then sneered, saying, he saved others, let him save himself if he is the Christ, the chosen of God. And so you can see the different attitudes. There's those who are mourning, there are those who are casting lots, there are those who are undecided, but the rulers, they're mocking him, and they're saying, he saved others, let him save himself if he is the Christ, the chosen of God.

Of course, there are those today who do mock, but I think that the majority of people today are just like the soldiers, more like the soldiers than they are like the rulers. Yes, there are those in our society, there are those in the world who mock at the cross, who mock at Christianity, who mock at the Word of God and of these things, but the vast majority of people just couldn't be bothered, uninterested, just playing their games, trying to win a few bucks here and there. And as we look at the scene, the question has to be, what is my response to the cross? And I know we say, well, you know, I believe that Jesus died for me, but does it move us to action? Does it move us to a place in that hymn that I love to quote, that love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all? Or is it just an intellectual curiosity? Is it just something we talk about and we're interested in and yet Jesus died for us? Or does it become real to the extent that we're willing to take up our cross and to follow him if necessary, even to death? Father, I pray that you'd help us.

Lord, to not be unmoved, to not be undecided, to not be those who are mocking, and Lord, not to be those who are just disinterested, only interested in scoring a few bucks, but Lord, that we may be those who see the Savior, even though it was 2,000 years ago that the reality of that sacrifice that he made may become so real to us, Lord, that we would follow him all the way. Lord, make these things real to us. Help us understand.

Lord, we need more than a preacher. We need more than a sermon. We need your spirit to write these things upon our hearts and to make them real so that they change us.

We pray this in Jesus' name. I pray, Lord, that you'd go with us, keep us and protect us, bring us together again safely. Next Thursday, Lord, for the brief meeting afterward here, Lord, we pray for your blessing and your direction on that.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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