

## Introduction

If you have your Bible, I want to ask you to go ahead and get it out, and open it up with me to the Book of 1 Peter. We are going to be in 1 Peter chapter 1, and we are going to look at verse 3. We will flip between 1 Peter chapter 1 and the Book of Acts chapter 10, so I want to give you an opportunity to go ahead and prepare to do that as well. So, 1 Peter 1:3 and Acts chapter 10. Now we are concluding today our series “What On Earth Am I Here For?” We are going to look at a sermon that Peter preached, but as we do so, we are getting ready for Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is coming up this week, so I think that it’s very appropriate for us to think about Thanksgiving and why it is that we give thanks and what that’s about.

You know, there are certain images and certain things that sort of get worked into the collective consciousness of nations and of people over time. I don’t know about you, but for me, whenever I think of Thanksgiving, if I have an image that comes to mind, it’s the famous painting that Norman Rockwell did that appeared on the cover of the Saturday Evening Post. I think we’ve got that image available, so let’s take a look at this picture. I don’t know if you’ve seen this picture before. Have you guys seen this picture? Whenever I think of Thanksgiving, for whatever reason, this picture just comes into my mind. It’s kind of interesting. You can tell these aren’t necessarily wealthy people. These aren’t famous people. We don’t really know anything about them, but they kind of look like they could be relatives or they could be friends. What we basically see, if you notice around the edge of the picture, it’s just faces, and then there in the center is the turkey, the symbol of God’s provision and God’s bounty. I don’t know if you know this, but Thanksgiving actually originated in the United States. Even though it’s celebrated all over the world now by a lot of countries, it started here. I think it’s important for us, as we approach Thanksgiving, to look and to say, “God, why do we say ‘Thanks’ to You? Why is it that we have Thanksgiving in the first place?”

Well, I think we probably remember from grade school things like William Bradford and the Pilgrims that came. They sought an opportunity to worship in freedom. I don’t know if you’ve ever had the opportunity to read any of the ancient documents... “ancient,” that might be a little bit of a stretch... but documents that go back 400 years. They talk about the giving of thanks as people hit our shores. This isn’t the original Thanksgiving proclamation. If you look that up, the one that we have most commonly is probably actually not accurate, but the one that was written five years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, says this. Listen to this. “... fearing the Lord, we should take notice, under so many intimations of his returning mercy, may we be found in insensible people if we were not standing before Him with thanksgiving...” We would be found an insensible people if we were not standing before Him with Thanksgiving. The translation, in other words, “If we take what God has given and we don’t give thanks, shame on us.” In 1777, the Continental Congress passed a resolution written by Samuel Adams. Listen to this resolution. “Forasmuch as it is the indispensable duty of all men to adore the superintending providence of Almighty God; to acknowledge with gratitude their obligation to Him for benefits received... together with penitent confession of their sins, whereby they had forfeited every favor, and their humble and earnest supplications that it may please God through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out in remembrance... it is therefore recommended... to set apart Thursday, the 18<sup>th</sup> day of December next, for solemn thanksgiving and praise.” Out of pressure from the Continental Congress, President George Washington issued this proclamation: “Therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday next to be devoted to the people of these States, to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be.” And as America came out of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued this proclamation: “No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things...” In other words, we didn’t make it through this war because of anything we did. “...Instead, they

are the gracious gifts of the Most High God who, dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy."

Sometimes I wonder if we forget about the importance and the centrality of thanks. It's Thanksgiving this week and people will stop to thank all sorts of people for all sorts of different reasons, but I think it's important that we remember that we don't thank Pilgrims this Thursday. We're not thanking Indians who taught them how to plant corn. We're not thanking politicians who have gone before and made proclamations. We are thanking the One that the people who wrote these documents were thanking. We are thanking God because He is the One who has provided everything.

You know, I've been here now almost 11 months. In that time I think that it's hard for me not to stop and just say, "Lord, You are being exceedingly gracious to Houston Northwest Church." I don't know if you've thought about this. I just asked those in the office to run some numbers for me. We've had 195 people join our church through covenant membership this year. Today we will baptize our 78<sup>th</sup> person. I feel sorry for that person... I feel sorry for me. (Laughter) I'm going to be in the water too. We've had new Life Groups started. We have story after story of life change. Listen. Whenever we talk about those things, do you know what's easy to happen? It's for people to stand up and be like, "Wow, look at the things that our church is doing to reach the community." I just want us to stop for a second and understand something. We didn't do a thing. Everything that is happening in this church right now is because of the gracious providential hand of God. (Clapping) I mean, it's true... (Clapping)... and for whatever reason, God has seen fit at this time and in this season, to say, "I'm going to pour out my Holy Spirit in power on this congregation." And for the people who have been here for years, I hear stories. There have been times where God is moving and it's kind of an up season. There's other times when it's been a down season. I think that we just need to step back and say, "Lord, we don't know why You are choosing to do this. We just want to openly confess that we know it has nothing to do with us. We don't have clean hearts or hands in this. We simply know that for whatever reason, You have chosen to say 'Yes' to move in this season." And do you know what you should do whenever God does that? You should do what all of these others have done. We should say, "Thank you, God. Thank you." Have you ever been a part of a church where God was not moving for a season? I know that I have been in those places before. It's not that people aren't coming to Christ. But it's not like we've experienced this year. If we don't stop and say "Thank you"... shame on us, because God has chosen to be gracious and just to say "I am going to save people and I am going to move in and among this church and in this city." For that we say, "Thank you. Thank you, Lord." (Clapping) It's worth a round of applause for the Lord. Let's give God a hand. "Thank you, God." (Clapping)

So as we come to the conclusion of this series, this is what I thought we would do. We would look at the place where Peter gave thanks. This is what we read in 1 Peter 1:3, one verse. Peter says this: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* The word "blessed" there was always puzzling to me. It says *"Blessed be God..."* How can I bless God? I mean, I can't give God anything. How can I bless Him? Well, the Greek word for blessing is "eulogetos." It's the same word where we get our word "eulogy." If you go to a funeral, typically someone stands up and gives a eulogy. What is the eulogy? It is the time when someone gives praise. They say good things. You have to be a pretty sorry person for no one to have anything good to say at your funeral. Right? I mean, people can come up with praise. But what if someone is genuinely good? The praise just pours forth. So Peter, caught up in the moment of worship here, says "eulogetos." In other words, "Praise be... Thanksgiving be. Let us state the good things about our God." And so he says, "I'm going to bless." The blessing there is, "through the

praise that I say, I am going to speak the good qualities of who our God is." So, I just want us to compare this one verse very quickly with the short sermon that Peter preached to Cornelius in Cornelius's house in Acts chapter 10. So, in Acts chapter 10 starting in verse 39, this is what we read. *"And we are witnesses..."* Peter is talking about Jesus. *"...we are witnesses of all that He did, both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after He rose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the One appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through his Name."*

### **1. We are thankful because of God's mercy.**

Why does Peter exhort us to give thanks? Why should we give praise? Well, the answer, I think, comes from this verse. It reminds me of a quote of Martin Luther's. Martin Luther wrote this. He said, "The day that you discover that the good works of your hand are not actually your good works but they are the works of God, you are beginning to understand grace." In other words, "I can't do anything good that didn't originate with God," and Peter says that. How does he say that? He says, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Why is He blessed? Why do we give praise to Him? Why is He the source of our good works? Because... look at this: *"According to his great mercy."*

What is mercy? Mercy is when I am supposed to face wrath and I don't. Mercy is when I'm supposed to get punishment and I don't. I hope that this church... I hope that every one of us never gets over what Jesus Christ did on the cross. I think that sometimes we domesticate the cross. It becomes so familiar to us that it loses its power from time to time. Sometimes we have to be reminded of what took place... that I was under judgement... that you were under judgement... and on the cross God took his Son and placed Him there to bear all of our sin... the past sin of the world, the future sin of the world... and He bore it. In that moment, He took everything. And for people who have been pardoned and forgiven, it must change us. "Good works do not come from my hand. They come because of the merciful hand of God. God could have punished me. He could have destroyed me but He didn't."

Here's maybe a way that we can understand it. Let's pretend that years ago, whenever my boys were small, they got in a tussle; they got in a fight. My older one, he's about to be a teenager, but let's pretend at this time he's like five or maybe six. I hear them arguing. I turn around and I look and I see Ben in this moment rear back and punch his brother right in the face. Now, this didn't happen, I should clarify... but let's pretend that it did and I see that happen. I get mad and I'm like, "Man, I can't believe that you would do that," and so I tell him, "Now, you go to your room, and I'll deal with you in a second." So he goes off to his room, and he sits there in time out, waiting for me to come and to punish him. My younger son is upset. He's crying, he's been hurt, so we're tending to him, kind of calming him down. Finally, he's okay. I then turn and I go into Ben's room. As I go into Ben's room, he's there and he sees me and immediately he starts crying because he knows that he did something that he should not have done. He knows that not only did he do something that he shouldn't have done, he knows now that he deserves pretty strict and harsh punishment for what he did. In fact, he knows that in our house, having done something like that is going to result in a spanking. He knows this is not going to be good, and he is not ready for it at all. He starts crying, wishing that he had not done what he did. He knows he is about to face punishment. He wishes that he hadn't done it, but it is going to be bad. Let's pretend that I walk in and I stand right over him and then I pull out this... [shows large lollipop]... (Laughter) Let's say that I look at my son and I say, "Ben, I want you to have this." He would look at me, and I would almost imagine he would think, "Did he poison that?" (Laughter) He would look at me, I could almost guarantee you, and say, "Why are you giving

me that?" I would say, "I'm giving you this because I want to teach you something right now, son. I want you to understand the mercy and the grace of God." He would say, "Well, I don't understand. How is this the mercy and the grace of God?" I would say, "Did you punch your brother?" "I did." "Do you deserve to be punished right now?" "I do." "If I punished you, would you think that I had been unfair or unjust in any way?" "No, I wouldn't think that." "If I give you this right now, what does that communicate to you?" "That for some reason you have decided to be kind to me." "Yes." This is what I think that we miss. It's that there was a time when we stood under judgement. Some of us have had that moment where we've said, "Oh no. Here it comes. Here comes the problem. I am really going to get it this time." Then suddenly we hear the Gospel and this is the Gospel... facing the wrath of God... facing the punishment of God... facing anything that could come to us, suddenly God extends favor to you and to me. The Bible calls it grace. Peter here refers to it as mercy. You deserve to be wiped off the face of the earth and to spend an eternity in hell, but instead you get the gift of life. Now we say to that, and I know what some of you are thinking, "That is a terrible parenting philosophy." And you are right. It would make spoiled children from sea to shining sea if we took up such a parenting philosophy. However, it is the only righteous and beautiful spiritual philosophy because it is the only way that you and I can respond rightly to what God has done. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his mercy..."* (Clapping) According to his mercy. If you want to know why you should show thanksgiving this week... it is because you deserved hell, and God gave you the favor of his grace. You deserve to be wiped out, but God instead gave you life through the death of his Son. You deserve punished but instead you got a party. This is mercy. "Amen" to that. (Clapping) I think that until we recognize that we deserve nothing but we get everything, we can't be grateful people. The reason that sometimes we are not grateful is because we believe that we are entitled to what we are receiving. Listen. You don't deserve anything. All you deserve is to be punished and to be removed from the presence of God. In fact, Jesus one day will say, "Away from me, I never knew you" to people who refuse to receive the Gospel. But instead, He looks at you and He looks at me and He says, "No, I'm now going to give you life." And that is according to the riches of his mercy. So Peter begins now to sing that out. Then Peter goes on and he says, *"According to his great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope."* Back in the sermon in Acts chapter 10, this is what he says there. He says it in verse 42: *"He..."* (Jesus) *"...commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the One appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead."* In other words, you and I are now supposed to live lives that declare that God is indeed merciful and gracious upon us. We deserve death. We got the life lollipop. Because we got that, what happens? We are now supposed to live as witnesses and to testify to that.

## 2. We are thankful because of living hope.

The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche... I don't know if you are familiar with him... he's the guy who's famous for saying that God was dead. He has a quote in one of his books called "The Twilight of the Idols." This is what Nietzsche said, "We have come from nothing, we are going to nothing, and in between we contemplate our nothingness." Happy guy, right? (Laughter) This was Nietzsche's point. He says, "If there is no God, then that means that everything that exists was not created but just came from nothingness." It just a grand accident and if nothing was created but is a grand accident, then that means that one day whenever we die or whenever this planet comes to an end or whatever happens, Nietzsche would say that would mean that then nothingness will resume again one day. So, if we came from nothing and we are going to nothing, in the midst, guess what? This whole existence is nothingness. I want you to think about that for a second. You know, there's a lot of people in our world that actually believe this. They would say, "There is no Creator." In fact, there might be people in this room right now and you say, "I don't even know if God exists. I don't know if God created everything." Listen. Let me tell you the logical

conclusions to a philosophy like that. If you don't believe that there is a God and you don't believe that God has created, then that means that you believe that life has no point and at its conclusion there will be no spiritual reality. That means if you believe that everything is an accident and one day we will return to nothingness, you have no reason to treat people with love, kindness, or grace in your life now, because really life is pointless if there is no God. You just get what you can get as quickly as you can get it. There's no reason to treat people with kindness. Humanism as a philosophy ultimately has no grounding. Why? Because there's no reason to be kind to people if everything is meaningless and there is nothingness. There's no reason to be kind. There's no reason to be loving. Now, the problem with that is, is people inherently want to be kind. They feel that they are supposed to be kind. But why? There's no reason to be kind or to be hopeful if everything is nothingness which is why Peter then says, "Listen. He commanded us to preach to people and to testify. He is the One appointed by God." It's the same reason why, in 1 Peter 1:3, Peter says, "We now have to live out a living hope because we have to live out what the world sees around us." Listen. There's people all around that will try and live out kindness and mercy and grace, and they're not Christians. Why are they doing that? There's only one reason why they are doing that. It's because they can't handle thinking through the alternative, because if they honestly think through the theological and philosophical underpinnings of their existence, they will realize either "A. There is no underpinning" or "B. There has to be a God." I mean, those are your only options. So people that are struggling with that every day try to ignore it, and they just think, "Well, I'll just try and be as kind as possible." So, the world is filled with people that are just being kind because they think it will fill up the time. But listen to me. These boxes that are here up front... these are examples of living hope because we believe that being kind to people is a way to demonstrate and testify that Jesus is the One appointed by God. When you go out here today and you take a tag off of one of these Christmas trees... when you pull a tag off, guess what you are doing? You are declaring, "I'm going to live out the hope that I have in Jesus Christ."

Our church started a ministry this school year. It's called Kids Hope. Kids Hope partners with Brill Elementary which is just a couple of miles down Cypresswood. Right here in our neighborhood, this school was praying, believe it or not. The administrators at that school were praying and asking God, "God, provide a church to partner with us." I know that seems maybe surprising to you, but I want you to just hear some of the stories of living out hope. Listen to this. "When Brill students return from Thanksgiving break, 23 of them will look forward to meeting with their mentors supported by 30 prayer partners and a team of volunteers ready and waiting to minister to the staff of 85 administrators, teachers, and staff members. The staff at Brill has welcomed Houston Northwest mentors with open arms and warm hospitality. How true it has been that our heavenly Father has known the things we would have need before we were even able to ask Him." Listen to this one story written by Mindy. She is one of our church members who is a mentor. "Even though I have kids of my own and I work with fifth-grade girls, I was still nervous about meeting the child I will mentor for the next year. 'Would she like me? What if I don't know what to say? What if she doesn't say anything?.' As it turns out, I did most of the talking our first time together, but one question came from my mentee..." I want you to hear this. "...came from my mentee that caught me by surprise. The Kids Hope training video said, 'A lot of children in need of attention ask this one particular question, and even some of my fellow mentors reported that they had been asked the same thing. I just didn't believe that kids would wonder about this. While we were playing a game, my mentee began to feel comfortable enough to open up a little bit. Then she asked me the zinger. 'So, who else are you going to see today? What other kid comes after me?' I was taken aback because there it was, the question, and I explained to her, 'I'm here to see only you. I am all yours.' It truly hit home that many of these kids feel lost in the shuffle. They just want to feel special and unique to someone. They want to be the only one. I strive to love her with the love of Christ, the One and Only, who has eyes for every one of us." Now you tell me.

Why would you do that? You say, "Well, it's the nice thing to do." No. Don't do that. There's no reason to be nice. If we come from nothing and go to nothing and in between we contemplate our nothingness, don't be nice. But what if I get life and breath because God, in his providential mercy, provided grace and gave me life? Then what do I do? Then I serve. I want you to just hear one other story from our Kids Hope mentors. She said, "I rushed out of the church and pulled into the parking lot at Brill Elementary. I made mental notes of the items on my checklist. "Signing in. Looking around. Wondering, "Where's Brian? Is he absent? Had he forgotten?" I politely told the receptionist, as she called his classroom, that I am going to get our game and will return quickly to wait for him. I round the corner, a box of blocks in my hands, and there he is walking quickly with a big smile on his face and then gives a very shy wave to greet me. Our mere 35 minutes had been whittled down now to 25. As I inquire of Brian's favorite color... red, just like mine... and hand him every single red block from the box, I feel my heart rate slow down. I forget about the checklist in my head, and I watch as this precious child builds a house made of red blocks. Now this was not like any house I've ever seen before, and as I ask about the details, Brian's world opens up to me. I don't think he has ever built with blocks before. He's never explored the shapes and sizes and the way they fit together. We talk about houses and cars and rooms. We build a tower and we count the number of blocks, adding more and pray that it will not topple over. He smiles as he counts all the way to 17 and decides to choose another shape and make a tower. His joy is infectious and my cup overflows." The reason for kindness, the reason for living hope is you wake up one day and you realize, "This life must have a purpose."

### **3. We are thankful because of the resurrection.**

In our reading this week in "What On Earth Am I Here For," I love one of the quotes that Rick Warren said. He said, "I am not God's attorney, but I am his witness, and there is a key difference. An attorney is there to defend. A witness is only to say what she or he saw." We are called to be witnesses. What does that mean? I go to a local school and I sit down with a child and I say, "This is what God has shown me. This is what I've seen." I go into my office and I say, "This is who God is because it's what I've seen Him do in my life. I am not there to defend. I am not there to try and argue. I am simply there to say, 'This is what God has done in my life.'" Living hope. So now my question for you is this. "Are you willing to do that?"

Peter gets to the end of that verse and he says this: *"According to his great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* The resurrection. And guess what? It shows up in his sermon in Acts 10 as well. This is what he says about the resurrection. He says this at the end of verse 42, *"He..."* (Jesus) *"...commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the One appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead."*

I've always thought of the resurrection in different terms. I've always thought of it as the reason that Jesus came back to life was to show us that one day we will be risen with Him. One day we will get to spend eternity in heaven with Him. Those are great things. But do you know what? We need to be thankful today for the resurrection for another reason. Guess what? God raised Jesus for a very specific job, and this is what the job is: To one day judge the world. God raised Jesus from the dead to one day judge you and judge me and judge all of creation. So, I want you to hear this. If we have been given life through the cross and if now we go and we proclaim that, as we live out the hope that has been given us, there are some people that now need to hear this. You may not know it, but if you read Revelation chapter 20 and chapter 21, you are going to see this. You are going to see that there will be a day, there will be a time, when Jesus Christ will return, and He will be the One who sits on the throne... the great white throne, as it is described in Revelation 20... and He will be the One who will judge the entire world. In that moment when He judges, guess what his standard for judgement will be? His standard will be his own righteousness.

If you go back and you read more of the Book of Revelation, you will see that there is a time when Jesus returns. The Bible says that He is wearing a robe and it's covered in blood. Initially whenever you read it, you might think it's blood because He has been in battle and He is destroying enemies with the sword that comes from his mouth, the sword of his Word. But actually, as you begin to read, you discover that the blood in which his robe is drenched is not the blood of his enemies. It is his own blood because He has given his life for you and for me. So, as Jesus Christ returns to judge one day, the standard for judgement is this. "Is your robe also washed in the blood of Jesus Christ? Are you the one who has received the righteousness of God from the cross, from the empty tomb? Have you received it?" As we approach Thanksgiving, this is my question for you and for me. "Are we willing now to say, 'God, thank you for what You are doing at Houston Northwest. God, thank you for what You are doing in lives. God, thank you for what You are doing here because, God, You have given the gift of life. You have given us a living hope that now we can go out into the world and demonstrate that we do believe that life has meaning and purpose. God, we can do that with faithfulness and with assurance and with surety. We can do that because we know that one day, God, your Son Jesus Christ will return and judge, and we will be found righteous because of the fact that we have said 'Yes' to Him.'" Now that is big. (Clapping)

So Thanksgiving comes because Jesus Christ has declared us righteous before God. Thanksgiving comes because Jesus Christ has declared us righteous before God. This is my question then today for you and for me. "Are you someone who has said 'Yes' to Jesus? Have you taken the gift of grace, the lollipop of life, through the cross? Are you someone, whenever one day Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead... are you someone that Jesus will say 'You have received my grace.'" Here's the thing. People all in this room... You may have been told a lie your entire life. You do not get saved by coming to church. That's a lie from hell. I want you to know this. You may have been told your entire life, "You get saved because you are really nice to people." No. Listen. People who don't even believe in God are nice to people. That doesn't matter either. There is one way that you are saved and that is by receiving the grace of Jesus Christ through his blood on the cross and his resurrection. That is the only way that you are saved. Did you say "Yes" to that? So today there may be some of us who cannot have a true Thanksgiving because, you know what?... we are going to thank someone sort of invisible out there. We are going to thank our parents or we are going to thank our friends. No. There is one Person that deserves our thanks and his name is Jesus. That's the only Person who gets our thanks. So, if you are not ready to give that thanks, then guess what? You haven't received the grace. So today, this is how we are going to conclude. We are going to celebrate with thanksgiving the things that God is doing and has done in our church, but first we want to make sure that you... You... today have said "Yes" to Jesus. If you have not received the grace and the goodness of Jesus Christ, today is the day. You deserve punishment but He gave you life through the cross. One day when He returns to judge, He will find you innocent because of the blood that his robe is covered in... The blood of his cross. That happens today if you say "Yes" to Him. So will you say "Yes"?

In a moment, there will be people here at the front, and there will be a time to respond and this is what we will do. If the answer for you is, "Today I am ready to receive Jesus Christ," I am going to ask you to stand up and come forward and pray with one of these people. If you say, "You know what? I've been lost and whatever I need to do to find purpose in this life..." come forward and pray with these people. But don't leave today believing that Thanksgiving has anything to do with turkeys or football but leave today knowing that Thanksgiving is about what God is and has done through his Son Jesus Christ. Say "Yes" to Him today. "Amen and amen." Let's pray.

"Father, we thank You for the fact that your Gospel is the source of all thanksgiving. God, we thank You for the fact that even on days when we are not expecting it, You keep pouring out your graciousness. Father,

on days when we are not prepared for it, God, You keep showing us that You are here. So now, Lord, we come to a time where it's time for us to respond. You have given us life. Many of us haven't received it. Father, You have given the life of your Son and we have ignored it. Father, You have been resurrected from the dead. You raised your Son from the dead, Lord, but we missed it. God, we have been thinking that we are entitled to these gifts when instead You gave them. Lord, today is the day. May we say 'Yes.' God, through our feeble attempts, through words that somehow still seem to fall short, Lord, we simply ask this. 'God, would You please move today in this room? Would You stir our hearts so that we might recognize that the reason that we have to give thanks is that we were broken and diseased and under condemnation, but now through the cross You have declared that there is no condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ. Father, would You save people today? Lord, would you bring those who are lost to You? God, would You have them say 'Yes'? Lord, we pray that today there could be more thanksgiving, not because of what You have done at Houston Northwest but because of what You are doing right now, God. Bring the lost home to You, Lord. We pray this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen."