

Palm Sunday: A Reason for Celebration?

By Bob Vincent

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Luke 19:41-44, Hebrews 12:25-29

Preached on: Saturday, April 4, 2020

Robert Benn Vincent

80 Hickory Hill Drive
Boyce, LA 71409

Website: www.rbvincent.com

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/rbvincent

Luke 19:41.

41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 42 and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes. 43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

This is the word of the Lord.

Let me pray.

Lord Jesus, you know that I am inadequate and, once again as I confessed last week, I'm nervous because I'm an old dog and it's hard to teach an old dog new tricks. Lord, I've been preaching since 1965 but doing this kind of preaching is a very strange thing for me. Would you, in spite of that, remove my self-consciousness, move me out of the way, and let the written word of God shine forth in the power of the Holy Spirit that each of us listening to this today may hear the voice of the Good Shepherd saying, "Come to me all who labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." Hear our prayer, O Lord, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

I want to call your attention to this passage of Scripture, Luke 19:41-44, because it's a very striking thing. You know, Palm Sunday is a time when people really enjoy things like children coming and waving palm branches and proceeding down the aisles, that goes on in many many churches, and yet is Palm Sunday really a celebration? Is Palm Sunday not rather an omen of something dreadful to come? Because we see here an amazing event, people who are celebrating on one day are crying out on another day within the week, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" What does that mean? It means that you and I are fickle. It means that we are unreliable. It means that our opinions change and vacillate. It means that you can't count on me or yourself because our opinions change. There is only one person who never changes and that is our Lord God, the Father, the Son

and the Holy Spirit, and the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of the eternal God, left the glory of heaven without ceasing to be God in any way whatsoever and became a real and true human being just like you and just like me except he never sinned. He did not have a sinful nature. That's certainly not true for me and if you're honest with yourself, it's certainly not true for you. So we can say Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.

And it's interesting the name of God is Yahweh if we look at the four letters of the Hebrew Bible, and that is God's name. Jesus took on the name of God plus the word "salvation." So it's sort of like Yahoshua or Yashua, and it's identical to the famous person who led Israel into the Promised Land after the death of Moses, Joshua, Yesus, the son of Nun. And so that's the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's the name of the God-man, not the name of God, and so Jesus takes that name, "the Lord is salvation," and he comes into the world and he lives a perfect life. Now if we are honest with ourselves, we know that that's certainly not true of any of us. That's why we have to be careful when we speak about other people, that we don't bring railing accusations against others as if we were saying, "Well, I would never do that."

So what do we see here? We see an enthusiastic crowd. It's almost like a political rally, isn't it? People gathering together and shouting and celebrating, "Here he comes!" And it's a fulfillment of a prophecy in Zechariah that we won't go into today, but here he comes and people are excited but what happens as Jesus proceeds towards the city of Jerusalem, coming down from the Mount of Olives?

I remember in 2000, in the winter of 2000, my son-in-law, John Ewell and I joined a group of other pastors on a tour of Israel and as you come down the Mount of Olives, you can see the whole temple area which is no longer there, all that is left of the ancient temple are the foundation stones. The temple itself, not one stone has been left on another. Today on top of the foundation of the old temple that was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, what you find are two Muslim shrines and it is not there anymore, that is, the temple. It's gone and what's left we call the Wailing Wall, is a wall where the foundation stones were placed there under the great building program of Herod the Great who was not even purely Jewish, he was half Edomite, and so he went into a massive building program 19 years before the Christian era.

Now it's those stones that Herod brought in to fortify the temple that are left. That's the Wailing Wall and people go there to wail. Why do they wail? They wail because the means of redemption that was provided throughout the entire Tanach, throughout the entire, we call it as Christians, the Old Testament, was taken away, and I would submit to you that it has been taken away for good. Why? Because it's impossible that the blood of bulls and goats and the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer could take away sin.

So when sin was finally dealt with, then these shadows of the reality that's heavenly were removed, and so Jesus is saying as he comes to Jerusalem something very solemn and serious. He's saying to people as he weeps over the city, he sees the city and he's moved to compassion and he weeps over it. I want you to know something: the Lord Jesus Christ

loves you. The Lord Jesus does indeed understand what you're going through because he as a real and true human being, has suffered in all the ways you suffer yet he never sinned. In my suffering, I'm apt to rail against God and say, "Why me? Why did you pick on me, God?" But that's not the way it is. The Lord Jesus Christ fully understands you. He enters into your sorrows and your suffering. He understands. He knows what it's like to be tempted beyond your ability to bear it because unlike you in 1 Corinthians 10, there was no way of escape for him. It was the plan of God the Father that the eternal Son of God would die on the cross for our sins.

So as he looks at the city, he weeps over it. I want to submit to you that today, Palm Sunday 2020, the Lord Jesus Christ is weeping over our world's situation, not simply in Louisiana and Texas and Arkansas, but throughout the United States, and not simply here, he's weeping over the people of China. He's weeping over the various nations of Africa. He's weeping over Saudi Arabia, the most persecuting country in the world of Christian people. He's weeping over Iran. He's weeping over Europe. He's weeping over you because you are suffering and he knows and he understands.

"As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it," and listen to what he says in the next verse, 42, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now," notice the words, they're striking, "it is hidden from your eyes." Wow. Blindness. We can only see what God enables us to see and without God pulling back the veil, we're left in the blindness. We can look at things and see clearly reality and yet there is the blindness that is part of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Blindness. You know, when I look at what's going on in America today with political leaders and with world leaders, I'm struck. There is incredible blindness. Incredible blindness and I'm gonna say something I want you to pay great attention to: we cannot solve this problem without divine help, and all our efforts to solve it are going to backfire. Things are going to get bad but I want you to know that the Lord Jesus Christ is weeping over you and he wants you to be spared suffering.

Listen to what he says further, he says in verse 43, "The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls." Listen to me: if you just study carefully the Torah, you discover in two books of the Torah, Leviticus 26 and then in Deuteronomy 27 and 28, you discover something very significant, that there are curses when people break God's covenant. God enters into a covenant that is a loving covenant but when people defy that covenant, they come under covenant justice and it means that God, as we see through the prophets, has a lawsuit against those who have broken his covenant. And so what we're reading here in these verses of Luke 19:44, "They will dash you to the ground, you and your children within your walls." If you read those curse sections in Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 27 and 28, you will see that Jesus is simply saying these curses are coming to pass.

You know, throughout history, that's happened before. It happened when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom in 722 before the Christian era. It happened in the three

basic invasions of Judah that occurred under Nebuchadnezzar and they're literally fulfilled. Do you know that one of the curses that's cited in the book of Deuteronomy is that people would become so hungry they would actually kill and eat their own children and they would not share any with those in their family? That's dreadful. That's dreadful but historically we know that's true. It's happened again and again and again. And according to an eyewitness of what happened, a General of the army of Judea named Josephus realized when he was defeated by the Romans that resistance to the Roman Empire was pointless and he tried to persuade people not to resist anymore, and so what happens is they will not leave one stone on another because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.

I want to submit to you that with the coronavirus 19, this is a time of God's coming to us. God is coming to us in the United States, in Washington, DC, in Seattle, WA, in New York City, in New Orleans, LA, where Mardi Gras helped spread this terribly. He's coming to us and he's calling us to recognize the time of his coming to us. This is a momentous event.

Now I want to direct your attention to something else. I want you to consider with me four chapters, and we're not gonna read them, four chapters that I happen to begin reading on April 1 and concluded today, that is, becoming I'm filming it the night before, on April 4th, and that has to do with a section of the book of Isaiah 24-27, and those verses are very powerful. I would like to ask you to consider taking some time today, this afternoon, and reading those four chapters maybe with a pen in hand, or a notebook in hand, and write down the things that God would really seal to your heart what is he about. But I want to say one thing and this is found in Isaiah 25:7-8, because in the middle of all of the judgments that God had decreed, listen to this, this is an amazing verse, Isaiah 25:7-8, "On this mountain," what mountain? That's Mount Zion on earth, the earthly Jerusalem, the city. "On this mountain," Isaiah says, "he," he's referring to our Lord God, "he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations." Listen to this verse, verse 8, "he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of this people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken." Wow. Do you mean that on this mountain, referring to the earthly city of Jerusalem, on Good Friday God began to fulfill this? Do you mean that on this mountain, the mountain on which Jerusalem was built, God caused death to be swallowed up forever? Wow, what a wonderful wonderful thing and this is a prophecy about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who put Jesus to death? I did. My sins nailed him to the cross. It was the plan of God, God's plan before the foundation of the world to provide the Lord Jesus Christ as the sin-bearer. "Behold, the Lamb of God," said John the Baptist, "who takes away the sins of the world." He will swallow up death forever.

I've been with a lot of people when they died, including my own father. I can tell you that there is nothing pretty about death. Death is an alien to our planet and death is an enemy, and death is the last enemy that will be destroyed, and death will be destroyed because the Lord Jesus Christ by his death on the cross on Good Friday, and by the three days he

spent from Friday until sundown, the beginning of Saturday, that's the second day, and the third day, Sunday morning, the first day of the week, for three days if you understand biblical time, in those three days, guess what? Easter Sunday, which I am looking forward to and will try to present to you a sermon in a more cheerful setting than my library, Easter Sunday is when the Lord Jesus swallowed up death. He's defeated death and yet we don't see that fully applied until his Second Coming.

How is that? Well, it's like this. I like boxing. I rarely ever get to go to a boxing match. The last one I went to, I went to with my dear friend, Joe A., who also likes boxing and he and I went to the Rapides Parish Coliseum, and this is what you see in a boxing match: you see somebody is hanging in there, hanging in there, and then in one particular round, that person gets a blow right on the chin and they go down. But then the bell rings, and so they're able to go back into the corner and the mouthpiece is adjusted and the smelling salts are put under their nose, and they go back in. Now you know what's gonna happen in the next round. You know in the next round the person who received the knock-out punch in the previous round is going down for the count and will not get up, and that's the way we need to understand it. When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross and was buried and rose again the third day, he knocked death in the chin with a knock-out blow, but the bell rang and at his Second Coming what's going to happen? The final enemy, the last enemy will be destroyed forever. So we reflect on those words.

Now I'd like you to look at a passage of Scripture as we move on. I'd like you to turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Haggai. Haggai is probably hard to find but actually if you think about it for a moment, it's not that hard because Haggai, if you go to the gospel of Matthew and there and turn left going backwards, you'll go to Malachi, then to Zechariah and then to Haggai. So it's the third to the last book in the English Bible, and so there we go.

Haggai 2:6-9. "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty." Verse 9 of Haggai 2, "'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty." Think about that with me for a moment.

When my son-in-law and I went to Israel in the year 2000, we went to the very place where the Lord Jesus was whipped. I was so moved to be there, I got down on my hands and knees and I kissed the pavement. Other people looked at me like I was a fool. Well, I guess I am a fool in some ways but I'd rather be God's fool than the world's fool. I was so moved the fact that those very stones the Lord Jesus had walked on, the Lord Jesus had been whipped there by those Roman soldiers.

Now let's get the context of Haggai. The context of Haggai and Zechariah for that matter, is that the people have returned from exile. It's as if once we get out of this exile we're in, it's as if we've gathered together in our buildings again. The trouble is that during the

coronavirus of the Babylonian captivity, the buildings were destroyed. And so they return and 70 years after the temple was destroyed in 586 before the Christian era, 70 years from that point in 516 before the Christian era, the temple began to be rebuilt. And the reaction of the people was this: the young folks were so excited, they were very celebratory, "Look at it! Oh, this is wonderful! Praise God!" But the old folks, those who had seen the temple that had been built by Solomon began to weep and wail because it was nothing to compare. Nothing to compare. You may well lose the building that you worshiped in, that's not impossible, that is not impossible, but remember it's not the building, it's the people.

So in order to comfort the people, God gives a prophecy to Haggai and he says, "The glory of this house is going to be the greater than the glory of Solomon's temple." Why? "Because the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant." Wow, the Lord Jesus Christ, Almighty God, true God, true man, came to that temple and what happened is the desired of all nations will come. And he filled the house with his glory. The glory of the second temple is not Herod the Great's building program that came centuries after Haggai and Zechariah, the glory of the second temple is that the Lord of glory came to the second temple and he beautified it by his wonderful presence.

I want you to know something: right now today on Palm Sunday, the glory of God is available to you and to me. The only thing that separates us at the present time is that we're not physically present together. But you know, I'm struck as I happened to read in my English Bible reading today, the fourth chapter was 1 Corinthians 5 and St. Paul says to them, "When you gather together and my spirit is present with you, I want you to know that we're together today." This is the church of the living God and it's an amazing church. This coming day of prayer and fasting on Good Friday, April 10, a coming together. Do you know that the Presbyterians along with the Congregationalists executed the Anglican king of England, wow, in 1648? Think of it, Anglicans and Presbyterians uniting together to appeal to Almighty God to stop this coronavirus and all of the ravages it's causing, particularly economically. I want you to see something beautiful: the Lord Jesus Christ is present right now with you and with me though we are not physically together, we're keeping that social distancing. "The glory of this present house," Haggai 2:9, "will be greater than the glory of the former house," says the LORD Almighty. "And in this place I will grant peace."

Now my last text as we go through this dig. I like to dig with Scripture as if we're on an archaeological dig. I had a woman who used to come to our church and said, "Coming and listening to you preach is like going on an archaeological dig. You're just digging and exploring and digging and exploring." And as we explore one more text, I want to direct your attention there right now and that is found in Hebrews 12:25-29. Hebrews 12:25-29. Listen to these words. They are the next to the last chapter of the book of Hebrews which contains some wonderful wonderful teaching.

25 See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we,

if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? [Now verse 26] 26
At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once
more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."

That's a quote, you see, out of Haggai. Verse 27 of Hebrews 12,

27 The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken--
that is, created things--so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

I'll read on the next verse but we're coming back. Verse 28,

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let
us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29
for our "God is a consuming fire."

Think with me for a moment. God is shaking things up, isn't he? I've never seen anything like this in my lifetime. Sandy and I were born in the 1940s, we've seen a lot of things. I'm a student of history and I've never seen anything like this. Do you know the computer was invented as a result of World War II, the need to calculate the motion of a ship at sea and calculate where to place those guns? And out of that came the computer. The computer. I remember when I bought my first computer, it was a Tandy 1000 and it cost a lot of money and I bought my first modem at that same time in the fall of 1988. I taught myself DOS. Let me recommend studying a DOS manual, it works better than any sleeping pill you can ever take. It took me a year to read through those things and learn it because it put me to sleep. But listen, the computer now is available everywhere. On my wife's Apple watch is more computing power than all of the computers that were there in 1969 for the moon landing. Isn't that amazing? And from that Apple watch she can get a message from somebody in China or Africa or the Middle East. People can call her on her Apple watch. No, I'm not going to give you her cellphone number. But it's just amazing to think that as she sits here with me praying for me, that she has more computing power on her left wrist than all of the computers that were involved in that moon landing, the first anniversary of our marriage in 1969.

But listen: I remember when Sputnik was launched, 1957, I believe it was. Somebody decided to market the thing and there was Sputnik gum my dad brought home from work one day. Sputnik, and that scared the United States enormously and we went into a massive spending program. We're in a massive spending program now and what does that mean? It means that life as we have known it is not going to be the same when all of this is over. God is shaking things up and he's doing it because he loves you, because he wants you to know him, because he wants you to love him. He wants you to experience real life, true life, which is knowing him. He's saying that he's shaking things up so that we can receive what can never be shaken and that is God's kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Now I want you to think with me for a moment as you reflect on your life. There are people that you know and love who, in all likelihood, within six months time will be

dead, and if this thing goes on, you won't even be able to attend the funeral in person except at a graveside. You may lose your home. You may lose everything you've ever invested because the only way out of massive deficit spending is to print more money. More money. My parents bought a four bedroom, three bathroom home, one block from the Atlantic Ocean in Myrtle Beach, SC in 1954 for \$14,500. Wow. What happened? Well, a lot of things came together and in order to be able to keep foreign nations from collecting the gold of the United States, and in order to pay for a war that was fought on debt, and the great society programs that were waged on debt, and I'm not opposed to those things, I'm simply telling you the only way out was in 1971 by Executive Order, the President of the United States took us off the gold standard. And what happened? You can buy the same amount of stuff with gold today that you could buy with gold back then. You know what's gonna happen? Think about it. That car, that old used car that you paid \$700 for, it may be worth \$7,000 in five years time. Nobody knows where we're going except the Lord. Nobody knows where we're going except the Lord. Nobody knows what the future holds but we know who holds the future.

Why is God doing this to you and to me? He's shaking the things. Listen, I remember the words of a very dear lady named Corrie Ten Boom. When I went to Yad Vashem in Israel, near Jerusalem, and I saw that very uplifting Holocaust Memorial which is far more uplifting than the National Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC because it was full of hope. Full of hope, and the hope was that God was bringing his people back to the ancient homeland. But as I walked there, I noticed two graves with my Israeli soldier guide. I saw the grave of Oskar Schindler and I saw the grave of Corrie ten Boom. Now I'm not saying they were buried there but there was a marker there for Oskar Schindler of "Schindler's List" fame, and for Corrie ten Boom. Why? Because Corrie ten Boom, being a Dutch person, was very very respectful of the Jewish people and loved the Jewish people, and so her family hid Jewish people in their home, and finally she and her sister were arrested and they were sent to a concentration camp. Her sister, I think her name was Betsey, died but Corrie began to learn some truths. She began to be grateful for the fleas that were biting her because those fleas and the lice kept the German soldiers out of their barracks. Wow.

And so Corrie ten Boom is celebrated. She wrote a book called "The Hiding Place." That's a wonderful book. And Corrie Ten Boom said this, "I've learned to hold the things of this life loosely because it hurts when God pries my fingers off of them." What are you holding onto so tightly right now? What is it? Maybe it's your church building. Maybe it's your house. Maybe it's your life savings. Maybe it's your wife or your husband. Maybe it's your children. Do you realize that God owns it all? That there's not a single solitary thing that you own or I own? We are merely stewards of God's property and God's property isn't simply this lovely, old, antique cabinet here for my lovely office with so many books. It includes Sandy, who on October 10, 1988 was run over by a log truck. It includes our five children: Lydia, Amy, Jimmy, Ben and Andrew. It includes their spouses. It includes our 13, maybe 14 grandchildren that we have. All of it. I don't own them. They're God's property and I think he can do a whole lot better job of protecting them than I can.

I remember years ago a man who I sat under his teaching, and I won't mention his name. Well, I guess I should mention it because Bill Gothard is a man that when he's good, he's very very good, and when he's bad, he's terrible. But I remember that he had a teaching and it really helped me called "The Death of a Vision." You know, God puts an idea in your heart to do something for him, he guides you, he directs you, and you set about to do that, to build something and to do it for God, and then one day what happens? You realize that what you've been holding onto, God wants you to let go of. I think that God called me to let go of the church that I had served for 35 years, but I didn't. So I went on to the 40th year and I had a breakdown because I could not handle the stress of night after night after night of not sleeping, because if you don't get enough sleep, the mind goes faster and faster and faster and faster.

Don't you want peace right now? How do you get peace? You've got to let go of all those things. You've got to learn to hold them loosely, even something that God was in when he founded it because now God is going to destroy it if you can't give it up. But I've learned this, this great secret that God taught me in my wife's near-death experience where she was in a coma and went somewhere. Hm, that's a story for another day. I learned something because I began to have to deal with fear back in October of 1988. Fear she'd be late coming back from going into town. She would be late from a meeting. She would be this or that. Or my children, where were they? Why, why is she not home yet? Why is he not home yet? And do you know what would happen? I began to be overcome with fear. Do you know how I learned to get rid of that fear? I had to face my fear. I had to embrace my fear as if a hideous mask and behind that mask was the smiling face of the Lord Jesus Christ who loves me and wants good things for me, and loves you and wants good things for you. And as I embraced my fears and as I let go, then I never had to give up what I was willing to give up.

That's the story of my life. I've never had to give up what I dealt with and said to the Lord, "If you want to take Sandy's life," and named all my other children, "If you want to take her life, I don't want you to do that, Lord, but she's yours, she's not mine. Here is my whole life, here is my physical health, here is my mental health, here is my spiritual health, Lord, everything I am and have I give to you. Everything that I ever contributed to seeing established, I give it to you now." Because it's time for the vision to die, because if it truly does by our will of surrender to God, God will bring it back.

That's a great lesson. I don't know what's going to happen this week. I don't know if we'll all be alive on Good Friday to pray and fast with three denominations coming together. I don't know that. I don't know anything about the future but this I know: there is currently going on on our planet a great shaking. God is shaking the world. "Once more," says the author of Hebrews in verse 26, "I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." What does that mean? It means that the principalities and powers that oversee so much wickedness in our world, so much political division and strife, so much enmity between believers.

Wow. Do you know that on this very day when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, TN, three friends of mine decided to leave Presbyterian College in Clinton,

SC and drive to his funeral. The great scandal is the most segregated hour in the United States is still 11 o'clock. What is that? What is that? You know, there's no real difference between Baptists and Presbyterians. I could tell you a joke or two but there's no real difference. We do things a little differently. There's no real difference between the low church party of the Church of England and the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists and the Baptists, for that matter. And you know, when you get down to brass tacks, there's no real difference between Presbyterians and the Methodists. My grandmother was the daughter of a Methodist preacher in Wartrace, TN, and my grandfather, having finished seminary, arrived as a single man in Wartrace and on New Year's Day of the year 1900, he married the daughter of the Methodist preacher. You know that a strange thing that for seven generations the daughter of a pastor married a pastor. Five Baptists, four Methodists, one Presbyterian, the right one.

Listen, listen to me, none of that really matters. Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you belong to the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn who are written in heaven? Do you belong to that church? That church is invisible right now. It's only known by God. Do you belong to the Lord? Do you love the Lord? Do you want to surrender your life to him? Do you want to experience his peace? Then I ask you today, Palm Sunday: won't you open your heart to him? Won't you take the thing you treasure the most, your husband, your wife, your money, your home, your health, even your mental health, won't you take that and lay it at the feet of the Lord and say, "Here, Lord, take it all." And you know, if you'll do that, I'll give you again my lesson, I've never had to give up what I was willing to give up, but when I'm not, oh, it hurts when God pries my fingers.

Wow, let's pray.

Lord, I just simply pray that you would work a work of grace in me and in Sandy, in our five children and five children-in-law, in our 13, maybe 14 grandchildren, Lord, that they would know you and love you. And Lord, I pray beyond that for all of my cousins who are left, very few are left. Lord, I have no more aunts or uncles. I pray for my friends from the days of growing up in Myrtle Beach to going to college in the upper part of South Carolina, to all of the people I came to know in Wichita, KS, in Pittsburgh, PA, Philadelphia, PA, and since 1975 here in central Louisiana, and the so many friends I've come to know as I've tried to serve the churches of Texas, southern Arkansas, and north Louisiana, and particularly my congregation in Texarkana who are watching with me now, Lord, all of the dear people there. Lord, bless them and keep them, and as we join together and sing a song that many people may not be familiar with, would you let the reality of that song rise in their hearts? For Jesus' sake. Amen.