

# Is Any Among Us?...

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[ 0 : 00 ] for what you add to the body here and for each of you guys that get up here and share devotional or sometimes a lesson to the children. Just good to hear what you, what the Lord's working in your life.

So praise the Lord for that. And I want to look at something this morning. I'm just thinking of the message James had last week on grace.

I just was looking at how this grace works here among us as a body and kind of went in a different direction than I thought it would be. But that's okay.

We all have something to add and I trust this morning that we can, each of us, we can bring and are willing to bring what God's given to us.

You know, we were looking at those verses in James 5 last, on Sunday, Wednesday night and there's some things there that just really, I think are so important for us to see.

[ 1 : 19 ] He says there, this phrase kind of, if any among us, that right there just talks that we're, we're a people right here, a local group, any among us.

We are a people that meet together regularly. We have different things that we bring to the, to one another as we come together.

And what he says there, some of those things are, sometimes there's an affliction, sometimes there's a song. If any married, let him sing. Sometimes there's sickness.

Sometimes there's other needs. So we all come together with those various things. And, you know, we bring so many different things here.

I, one thing, we're a body, we're a local body and that local body functions by, you know, Paul used the illustration of the hand, the physical body, the hand and the feet and the mouth and ear and the eye and how they help one another.

[ 2 : 27 ] And really they do. We depend a lot on the eye for our, our ability to, to move about and, and light comes into the, the body and so forth.

And, and we, we need, we need that same light when we come together here. That light is, you know, God's word to us. It's his, his presence among us and we need that light.

And so, there's so many things that are just a part of that. But you know, other things that we bring, our experiences in life, we, we all bring our experiences together.

Some, some of us, we have, you know, we have certain things in life or we have victories we've had. We, and maybe we have defeats and we bring them. We have some gains in life we've had, we have some losses in life and we, that's part of what makes us up and we bring that together and how do we fit that together?

It takes a work of, of, of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit to bring that among us here. I want to just look at that one phrase, if there are any afflicted for a little bit, just, maybe, think about that a little bit.

[ 3 : 43 ] If there's any afflicted and, um, I want to look at a couple of Psalms this morning, at least one, Psalms 88. and, you think of the various Psalms that are given to us and, and God kept these all here for us.

this Psalms chapter 88, it's different than others. I, you know, you can read, go and read Psalms 103. It's just a song of blessing the Lord and thinking of all his benefits and how he forgives all our iniquities, he heals all our diseases and so forth, how his great mercy to us from everlasting to everlasting.

But, Psalm 88 is different than that. And so, I want to look at that a little bit. This man definitely was a man with some affliction. That's kind of why I'm gone here. Doesn't really come out to say all what it is, but you can see it has come out.

It's, so he starts out, O Lord God of my salvation. But from there on, it just seems like, uh, it just goes, drives up for him. It just seems different.

He says, I have cried day and night before thee. And then, uh, right there you see there's something urgent in this man. He's, he's coming to God day and night.

[ 5 : 06 ] You know, we'll, we'll say some prayers. Might start out in the morning, end of the day, but he's coming day and night. So, let my prayer come before you, incline mine ear. My soul is full of troubles.

My life draweth nigh into the grave. Uh, he describes himself as, in verse 5, free among the dead. What kind of a picture is that? Verse 6, thou layest, thou slayed me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.

Your wrath lieth hard upon me. You afflicted me in all my, in all thy waves. and, he goes on to say some questions here.

Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? It's almost like he's putting God here to the test, you know, he's kind of, and you know, this, this is a cry of a soul that's, that's, he's in deep affliction here.

Uh, I've stretched out my hands to you, Lord. I'm called daily, but it seems like, you know, here's, here's that soul just crying out, but where's that answer, God? You're, you seem to be nowhere around.

[ 6 : 19 ] That, that seems to be what he's, where he's at right here. And, uh, verse, you keep going down. I cried, Lord, and in the morning, my prayer shall prevent thee.

And, thank you. Lord, why do you cast me off, off my soul? Why do you hide your face from me? I'm afflicted and ready to die. So, he's, he's in, he's in a place of affliction.

You know, and so James says, let him that is afflicted, let him pray. Because any among you afflicted, let him pray. Uh, and, you know, certain kinds of affliction cause us to pray.

They, they drive us to our knees. But, there's other things that come in our lives that, um, maybe we, maybe kind of ignore them for a little bit. We, we don't know what to do with it, but, um, we'll just kind of go along in life and hope it goes away.

And, uh, yet this man, where did he end up? You know, it, a lot of the Psalms you go through and, there's a distress, there's some disappointment, there's some trial he's going through, he's facing battles, but in the end he comes and he, he seems to get back to the Lord and he starts praising him.

[ 7 : 41 ] But this one, he never does. He just, it's, it's never gets back there. He seems to stay in the dark. He seems to stay there.

And, uh, you know, someone said, is, you know, God puts these in there. He, he could just say, no, I don't want that kind of prayer here in my book.

I don't want people to know that, but no, he puts these things in here. In, in affliction, there was a man that, God let us see what it's like. And, uh, there's some, there's a few other Psalms that are like that.

Um, and, Psalms 22, if you know that, starts out, my God, my God, why has thou forsaken me? That is the words that Jesus quoted on the cross.

So, we, we realized that, you know, Jesus knew the depth of agony. He knew some of this crying out to the Lord. And so, he knows, he knows and goes with us through that.

[ 8 : 43 ] So, if any afflicted among us, let him pray. That was, that's what James said. Any afflicted, pray. We have these things come. Um, you know, God has challenging futures for us.

And I say that for each of us as individuals, but more so as a church, as his body, he has future for us and he will go to great lengths to get us to pay attention.

I, I need that. I've found, uh, through life that I, there's, there's times that God has to put something in the way to get my attention. And it, it might be, um, it, it comes in various ways, but every branch, John 15, we heard a little bit from that this morning.

Every branch that brings forth fruit, he purges it or prunes it, he cuts it, that it may bring forth more fruit. He's just looking for more fruit.

You know, that purging time can be short or it can be long. Sometimes we go through a period and he's just looking for more fruit. That's just what he's after.

[ 9 : 55 ] More fruit. But there's some cutting and there's some pruning, there's some shaping, forming. And, uh, I, I, I read a little bit about this pruning, how, uh, guys will do this.

And, uh, you know, it, it comes at different times of the year. There are different purposes. Sometimes it's to shape a tree. Sometimes it's to get rid of the dead growth. Uh, you'll cut out something dead and just put it aside.

It kind of mentions that in John 15. Um, but the, the pruning comes as it comes. It's, it's for more fruit. You just have to more fruit in our lives.

And that is what, uh, that's what we want in our gardens this year. You know, at home, we're working on, we know what kind of fertilizer we're going to use.

What, how is our ground? What's the condition of the ground to get things ready before we plant and, uh, making sure that we get a good harvest. We want a good fruit to come. And, uh, so we work for that.

[11:01] And the husband, he will, he will, he will prune and prepare so that he can have more fruit. So, I, I read this, I wrote this down.

This is the law of the universe. There will be an abundant fruit out of agony. There will be life out of death. That's, that's a law.

We see it working all around us. Um, out of Calvary, there came forth life. There came forth, uh, for all of us.

There come, we, we drink from that. What came out of Calvary, what came out of agony, out of death. We, we, we still live off of that as Christians, as believers. We, we draw strength from that. Um, you know, I'm thinking, you think of the church in Africa, South Africa there, brother James and Carol were at the visit. They, they've been through a difficult time. Um, but yet I believe God is, is going to bring them through that and bringing them out and is going to and producing something there.

[12:07] Um, he's kept them here. He's kept them, uh, Peter looked at it this way. They're kept by the power of God. He said, now through a season, you are in heaviness that the trial of your faith being much more precious than gold, though it be tried in the fire might be found.

God was looking for faith. He was looking for that fruit of faith there and he still works in that direction. So he has these different, uh, different things that he's working at to, to bring forth that fruit.

You know, I, I'm gonna, something that just last fall, a local man here, Dan Evans used to have a shop here in Plains, but he, he's down in, uh, Thompson Falls.

Now he's got a shop there and, uh, stopped there last fall. And he was, he got to talking about what he's going through right now. Just, that was what was on his mind.

He's, he's facing cancer and he, that's what he talked about. Um, most of the time I was there, he got on to some other things. He said, I haven't hunted any this year. I've been facing cancer, been, uh, doing treatment for it.

[13:26] And, um, that was something there on his mind. And I talked to a, a guy there in Thompson yesterday. He's said he was, uh, a few years ago, they were making some plans for, um, building a house, but then his wife got cancer and he just put that all aside for a couple of years.

That changed everything in the life. And, uh, I want to, you know, that's something that, that's something I've experienced, been through that cancer, but there's something that's very kind of difficult for me in that is just the way I handled it.

Uh, we talk about praying for healing here and so forth. And what, what I, this is kind of humbling for me and a shame for me, but in, in, going through this, I, I confessed, I had got a hold of that confessing, confessing healing, just confess it, claim it, and it's going to happen.

And I did that for, for quite a while. Uh, even, even though people challenged me on it, confronted me somewhat on it, uh, some called me a false prophet because it never happened.

It, I, I prayed, said it was going to happen, God was going to heal her and it never happened. She died. My first wife died. I, I had a hold of that thing.

[14:48] I, I, uh, you know, I'd see signs on church billboards out there. You know, when the doctor says it's over, then God has a different answer for you.

I'd look out for those things. I was watching for all those things that, um, so I, you know, I, I was a part of that, name it and claim it for a while. I lived there just holding on.

Well, you just do when you want something, right? You're trying to hold on to something. And I had, uh, different guys would send me information, how their situation was and a lot of Bible verses on it and so forth.

So, you know, how do we walk with that? How do we, how do we walk with that kind of thing? We're going to all have certain things in life. We're going to all face something, something like that, that's going to confront us.

And so we're going to, it's going to test us. It's going to see what's going to come out, I guess, where we're at. That's what I, I, you know, I, I appreciate here, uh, brother Joe is often cautious on some of the faults that's out there.

[15:54] And I appreciate that. I, I need that a lot. There's a, there's a lot of faults out there. Um, we need to, we need to be careful for that. And we need to see that what God does say about, you know, he, he does heal and he wants to heal.

He's the healer. You, you see it through, throughout, but you know, you look at some of the times when he was asked to come and, uh, I was reading through one of the situations there with the, uh, the, the ruler had, his daughter was, was sick and he called for, uh, I think it's in Mark is where I was reading.

He called for him to come and Jesus is on his way and looks like, you know, it's kind of urgent and he should get there as soon as he could. But there's that woman that had an issue of blood for 12 years and, and she is reaching out and she's got that need.

And, um, well, should he stop to take care of this one or should he get to Jairus' daughter quick? Well, he has time to stop and he, and he takes time to, to, to help her and she has touched him and there's virtue gone out and now he, uh, has the time and she's healed.

Daughter, your faith has made you whole. Well, in the meantime, Jairus' daughter, Jairus' son sends a servant that don't bother to come. She's dead. She's gone. Well, it's like he missed it today. [17:22] He didn't make it in time. So, but here he comes and brings a couple of the disciples with him and just says, uh, the people that are there, everyone, they got the mourners in, the people that are, they bring in to, to mourn and wail and so forth.

And he said, hey, don't weep. She's just sleeping. And the scripture says they mocked him. They just left him to scorn. And he, he just goes in and raises her up.

So, here's the one who can raise up the dead. He had time. He had time. He wasn't limited at all in what he did.

And I think, I really believe that as a body of Christ, we're not limited either. God has all power to work through us.

I was in Ephesians there where Brother James is at last week quite a bit. Verse, chapter 4, verse, verse 7.

[18:37] Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. unto every one of us is given grace.

So, that grace he's just talked about here for us to walk worthy and so forth and in loathing and meekness, long-suffering for bearing one another in love, the operation of a body working together, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace and so forth.

There's one body, one spirit. You're called to one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all and through all and in you all.

He's just said that now every one of us has given us grace. Nothing we had to pay for, nothing we had to, we didn't have to, you know, scramble out like in a ball game you got to go out there and work hard, you got to get it.

He's just given it to us. We can receive that grace. It's, when we receive it, it's ours now to use, be faithful with, but he's given grace and according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

[19:51] How far is the gift of Christ? It's unlimited what he's given to us. So anyway, he's shown us these, I want to say, I want to say this, what, if God's unlimited, what limits God then?

And it's usually man, somewhere, I put a limit on him. David said, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.

It's usually somewhere where I stand in the way, where I, where I hinder. That's usually where the, the, the flow stops of his life, of his grace flowing in us.

Because if, if it's according to the measure of the gift of Christ, that's, it's all sufficiency, it's all, it's enough. But, but, where does that get stopped at?

And it's usually somewhere where, where I draw back, where I hold, hold back on what Christ wants to flow and let, let out, or so forth. So, I'm going to look here a little bit at some, things that God used that, how he uses things that are broken.

[ 21 : 05 ] there was the, there was the widow that, that had the, came to Elisha, I believe, and, the creditors had come, was going to take, take all she had.

And he asked her, well, what do you have? He said, I've got just, I've got a pot of oil. Just a small pot of oil. Elisha said, just pour that out into, go get all the vessels you can get.

Pour that oil. Into those vessels. Pots that can contain this oil. And so she did that. She did, she poured the oil out. She had to, she had to let go of what little she had.

And as she released that, let it go, it, it filled up the pots enough where she had enough to pay the debt and to supply her need. There was something happened there.

She let go of that thing. She let go of the little pot of oil and God supplied. Mary had to break her little box called an alabaster box. Must have been something that carried perfume because it says the perfume filled the whole room.

[ 22 : 17 ] She, she broke that box and now it was just perfume, just perfume to fill the house. And, yet it took something to break that.

Jacob was one that had natural strength. And, yet we remember when he, when he wrestled all night with, with a man, it says, I believe it was the Lord that he wrestled with.

But after that night when God touched him, then he now could put something on Jacob where Jacob had a different thing in his life. He now was called Israel. He had power with God.

God. And so, it's in that brokenness that we find that God can use us. I want to look at some things here today.

You know, even in, in our, in vegetation, in plant life, there, things have to die. Things have to die to, to really produce, to produce fruit.

[ 23 : 27 ] And, I find this is interesting. There's an article, I wrote down a few things. There's an article in the, that Remnant magazine that's back there.

But, just to think about, you know, we, we realize we're in a fallen world and even nature itself is somewhat against us. God said that we're going to, from the sweat of our brow, we're going to, bring forth, fruit out of the ground.

It's going to take some labor now. And, all that came with, the curse on, the earth, disease came, with that. And yet, yet, God in his mercy has, made a way that if we will honor him, keep in his commands so we can be free of some diseases.

One is in, in, in a marriage relationship. If we keep ourselves pure, and our, you know, the, the immoral lifestyle is full of disease.

That, that, we know that rampant in our society. So, God has provided marriage to protect us from that.

[ 24 : 46 ] how about a clear conscience? That keeps us from, there's a lot of the sin that comes from guilt. Guilt weighs you down.

And guilt keeps us, it's that hindrance within our lives. But it, it brings disease. Guilt does. So, God provided, he said, keep a clear conscience. And he has made a way for that.

And also, you know, in, in any form of life, when there's health there, it can fight off disease. If the body's healthy, most of the time it can fight off disease.

Plant life, if it's good and healthy, it can, it can fight off the disease most of the time. But there's those times when it comes. And we, that's the times God has provided for us to have healing.

And he, he made a way for us to, to pray for each other and, and bring, bring that help that we need when, when sickness and disease and so forth come.

[ 25 : 53 ] There's an, another part of creation. You think of all the plants and animals that have, that have died on the earth in the 6,000 years of history.

We know if they all, if they did not decompose, the earth would just be covered. I guess there was a, there was the flood that got rid of a lot.

But, um, since the flood, if there would be no decomposing or decay of the animal life and of human beings, we, we bury, well, we bury human beings, we put them in the ground for a purpose there. but there's still decay and that decay, that breakdown of, of the plant life and so forth and of life that's there, it produces more life.

There's something there. It, there's, there's a whole world out there of microscopic enzymes and bacteria and fungus that helps to break down the plant life and so forth.

[ 27 : 02 ] So, all of that is, is, uh, part of the, what brings forth life again. We, we, we want that. You want our organic matter in, in the ground to help in, um, growth of plants and so forth.

So, we're, we're, we're seeing that. That's, you know, it's part of the curse that's in the world, but yet it produces something. It produces that death, that seed falling into ground dies and it brings forth life.

So, our life coming out of, uh, our spiritual life is the same. It was out of death and out of our dying to ourselves, uh, maybe giving up a lot of things.

If we, we can see some of the things we have to give up. Sometimes our ambitions in life, um, sometimes our self-will has to be given up. Sometimes our, our great ideas, our grand ideas that we come up with, we have to lay those down at times.

How about worldly reputation? Uh, how about reputation right among us? That sometimes we have to lay that down. Um, our affections, uh, and so forth.

[ 28 : 12 ] All these things, our times are tested and we, we're, we have to realize that when we, when we give them to God, that's where God takes these things and, and uses them.

God is waiting to take hold of our failures and our nothingness and he wants to live his life, shine through those things in our lives and he's, that's what he's looking for.

And I want to look at 1 Corinthians 1 there. There's a couple, if you can turn to that. 1 Corinthians 1, I think it's important we look at this. 1 Corinthians 1, 1 Corinthians 1, verse 25, because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, the weakness of God is stronger than men.

You see your calling, brother, not many wise among you after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.

Things which are mighty, the base things of the world, the things that are despised, hath God chosen and the things that are not to bring to naught the things that are.

[ 29 : 42 ] That no flesh should glory in his presence, but of him are ye in Christ Jesus who is made, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

So these things, as we, as we bring them, I read this here recently, Charles Fox was a man several centuries ago.

I don't know much about him, but he called these the army of decreasing human weakness that God uses. For foolish enough to depend on him for wisdom and weak enough to be empowered by his strength, base enough to be kept in the dust at his feet and nothing enough for God to be everything, then he will, he will take that and use that in his, he uses that.

That's what God chooses, that's what God has chosen. These, these things in our lives that we're ashamed of, that's the thing God chooses to use. the early church last week was looking there in Acts 4 when Peter and John had healed that man and they were taken before the Pharisees and they were told not to speak anymore in the name of Christ.

they went back to their, to the church and they prayed. Not for themselves, they didn't pray for their own, you know, protect us Lord, but no, they went back and they prayed that God would give them more strength, more grace, more power to go out and represent him.

[ 31 : 42 ] and, I think there's our answer today. If we're running to, if we're, if we're earnest to represent Christ then, let that be our prayer, just God, do whatever it takes for us to, to, speak forth your name and declare who you are.

So they, you know, they didn't stop. They didn't cease to name the name of Christ as they could have went around that they could have just kind of chose not to speak about Christ now, right?

You know, they, they was bold to say it's in the name of Christ that you crucified that this man is made whole. That's the one thing the Pharisees and the leaders said, just go out and do your business but just don't name this Christ.

He's a sore spot to us. We don't want him mentioned but no, they, they didn't stop. They knew who the head of the church was and they went, they went on proclaiming him.

So God takes our brokenness and uses it and we bring that, you know, it's probably easier to come proclaiming a victory than it is to proclaim something difficult or a defeat or where we failed but yet God takes all those things and is willing to use them and so some of the other things he said there, is anyone glad at heart in James chapter 5 there, is anyone glad at heart?

[ 33 : 28 ] let him sing praises to God. That's, that's great and that's what we ought to do. Is anyone sick among you? Well call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

And then he goes on to confess your faults one to another and pray for one another that you may be healed and restored. I think there's something you can just sense the heart brother, you know, the heart that would come out here that the Lord would want for his body that we that we be healed and restored.

And you know it that comes in sometimes in various ways but surely it comes when we work together as a body when we can see one another's needs.

I think God is willing to come into our midst when we are willing to just be open to each other and bear one another's burdens.

He's willing to dwell among us and I think that honors him and glorifies him. You know if each of us comes if we maintain our independence if we just kind of stay to ourselves this person over here and we're all and sometimes we don't realize how we're doing that we get tested in that but if each one is independent little person little world or life then there's no body life that way there's no working together there's no functioning of the gifts like the eyes helping the feet and the ears the hands and so forth that interaction that we have that's that's where God meets when we come together you know we pray alone but when we come together and bring our prayer requests there's power when we pray together there's something there that God brings when we when we bring these prayer requests together and then just a little bit more on you know in Acts 4 there where after the apostles went back and they they prayed and it says there was great grace upon them all does

[ 36 : 19 ] God want to bring that great grace on us I believe he does that great grace we think of grace in various ways for by grace are you saved through faith and that is a grace for salvation but now there's a grace for us to work among us and I think there's where God wants to multiply that too Peter talked about the manifold grace of God yeah there's there's just so many different passages that talk about the different gifts that we have among us I didn't get on a lot of them today but I do I just wanted to mention that what I felt like we you know we each one bring things here in the body and I think it's important that we allow them to be apart and flow and let

God use them let God have his way among us here and right now we're facing some of these things these sicknesses that are coming so as we pray about these things I think God will is willing to heal and use them for we can strengthen our faith we cry out to him and so forth I want to just look at Ecclesiastes 4 yet this is just talking a little bit of looking at how something works when we work together Ecclesiastes 4 he's mentioned in here Ecclesiastes 4 verse 9 says two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor and a good example of that is in the book of Judges when the Israelites were ready to go to battle they said who should go up first and Judah the Lord said Judah go up first you're to go and start the battle and Judah said to Simeon would you come and help me and he did they went together and fought battles they said you I'll help you but you're going to help me so they they fought together and they were victorious for a while now there was times when they weren't they go through the book of Judges there was a lot of defeat there was a lot of darkness in the book of Judges but at the beginning they did fight together and there was victories so two are better than one they have a good reward for their labor if they fall the one will lift up his fellow but woe to him that is alone when he falleth for he hath none he hath not another to help him again if two lie together then they have heat but how can one be warm alone and if one prevail against him two shall withstand him and a three-fouled cold is not quickly broken he's just showing there

I think just a word about how the strength that we have when we're working together I guess by design so I'm just gonna ask what what do you have to give to the body is there something you're ashamed of God can take that and use it you've had some victories God can take that and use that so what what do you have to give to the body just wanna think about if you have something you're that's you're you just know it's a something that it's a it's a place where you're you just can't get over it it's a weakness or something you just it's it's been a hindrance to you somehow and frustration to you bring that to the body and you know we don't have to have it all wide open but it just bring it give it to the

Lord and let it let God use it as you will as he wants to so you know we God takes that and uses it for his glory I believe he wants his glory among us and in church and I guess if we can see how he how he works some of the ways that he works in our lives he has purpose for all of us so yeah thank you God that he it is he to him you he he he