

Speaker 1:

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Pastor Mark:

All right. If you've got a Bible, go to Genesis chapter 48. We're nearing the end of the story of Joseph. And as you're turning there, today we're going to see Jacob, Israel, grandpa nearing the end of his life. He knows that the finish line is in sight. He's almost there. And so let me commence with a question for you. If you knew that you only had, let's say, about a month to live and the finish line was sight and you know that your life was coming to an end, how would you spend your remaining days on the earth?

Pastor Mark:

And there was actually a psychological study that was done and was trying to determine for those who were at the end of life, they were at that terminal stage and they knew that they had about a month left, what were they doing? And perhaps even what were they regretting, because that might help change how we are living? And here's what they found. Number one, the top group said that their life was in disarray and disorder, that they didn't have all their bills paid, they didn't have their life insurance up to date. They didn't have their will current. They didn't have all their passwords organized. And so they needed the accountant and the attorney to help them get their affairs in order. And a subsection of that said, in addition to organizing their affairs, they would put out a personal hit on people that they hated, knowing that they couldn't be prosecuted by the time they died. If that's you, welcome to The Trinity Church, and you need a lot of healing. We're glad to have you here.

Pastor Mark:

In addition, the second group said, "I wish I had the courage to express my feelings." They realized at the end of their life, there were a lot of people they never told them, "I love you." Some of you, your dad was like this. He was emotionally pent up and not very verbal. And this was in large part the men who determined ... There's a lot of people I haven't expressed my feelings to. I haven't told them, "I'm proud of you. I love you. I'm going to miss you." And so they said, "I'm going to spend my remaining telling people how I feel about them."

Pastor Mark:

The third category of those was those who said that their regret was they didn't get more time with their friends, that they were so busy with life that they didn't keep up with their friends. And so they would spend the final month with their friends, making memories and making up for lost time.

Pastor Mark:

The fourth category said, "I wish I'd let myself be happier." Neither had fear of man or fear of failure. And as a result, they didn't have a lot of fun. Fear rather than fun was really the dominant motif in their life. And so what they decided was, "I'd take the last month, have some amazing adventures, go out with a bang, have some good times and some final memories." And then the last group said, the fifth group said, "I wish I had not worked so hard." So they said that they would in fact quit their job and invest

rather than waste the remaining time that they had. And that was in large part, the primary category for men, that they had invested so much in their career, that they had neglected their relationships.

Pastor Mark:

For you, what would you do if you knew that the finish line was in sight? And the truth is we don't always know when the finish line is in sight. And so we need to live in light of eternity at a little, times. Well, the reason this is pertinent to our time together today is in Genesis 48, we see this man named Jacob. He's already been a dominant figure in the book of Genesis. His name is also Israel. The nation of Israel is named in his honor. And he is at the end of his life. He is at the finish line. And you're going to see him today on his deathbed. This is him nearing the finish line. And what he determines that he will do with the remaining time that he has is he's going to bless. He's going to be a blessing.

Pastor Mark:

And this is something that all of God's children should aspire to. All the way back to Abraham, God says, "I'm going to bless you so that you can be a blessing to the nations of the earth." Ultimately, that blessing comes forth as the person of Jesus Christ who is our God and savior and comes from the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the man we will investigate the final days of his life together today. That being said, God blesses us to be a blessing. God blesses us to be a blessing. And I want to tell you that there are three categories of blessing. There's internal, external, and eternal.

Pastor Mark:

The internal blessing is knowing that God loves you, that you're forgiven, that God will never leave you nor forsake you, that he wants a relationship with you, that he knows every hair on your head. He knows every day of your life. He knows every longing of your heart, and that he cares for you. Sometimes we bless people internally by letting them know that we love them, that we care for them, that we appreciate them, that we're proud of them, and that when we are not together, we will miss them. That's an internal blessing.

Pastor Mark:

There's also external blessing. And this is provision. This is provision. This is where today he's going to manage the affairs of the household estate. He's going to distribute his assets, who gets the land, who gets the money, how does the portfolio get dispersed in the last will and testament? If someone loves you and they pass away and they leave you some resources, some finances, that's an external blessing.

Pastor Mark:

And some blessings are eternal. They are stored up for us in heaven. We can't take our blessings with us, but we can send them ahead. This is where the Lord Jesus says, "Do not store up your treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy. Store up your treasure in heaven." That's the eternal blessing. And he's going to pray over his son and his grandsons. He's going to seek to point them toward a strong relationship with God, for those eternal blessings.

Pastor Mark:

That being said, for those of you that are older, for those of you that are parents, grandparents, especially those of you who are patriarchs and the men, it is important for us to see that God puts us in positions of leadership, firstly, to be loyal to him. And secondly, to bless those whom we have the honor and privilege and responsibility of leading in our family. And for those of you men, I need to give one

casual caveat, and that is when we read about patriarchs and men who are leading and making decisions and being honored by their family, this is something you need to earn. You can't just be emotionally distant. You can't be godless. You can't be domineering and overbearing and just show up and say, "You're supposed to listen to me and honor me." It doesn't work like that.

Pastor Mark:

Jacob here is walking with God. He has acknowledged his failures. He is loving and leading his family. And he has earned the right to have this moment in his life. So we pick up the story in chapter 48, and we're going to learn a lot about blessing. Six times in this succession of verses it talks about bless, blessing, bless. This is the major theme, and it begins in chapter 48:1, "After this Joseph was told, 'Behold, your father is ill.'" How many of you have gotten that call? "Dad's in the hospital. Mom's in the hospital. Granddad's in the hospital. Grandma's in the hospital." This one looks bad, right? As you get older, you have some health complications, but there reaches a point where the family gets the call.

Pastor Mark:

The call is, "I think we're there. I think we're near the finish line. It's time to get on a plane. It's time to come to the hospital bed. It's time to say last goodbyes." That's where we find ourselves with Jacob. The last person that we buried in our family was Grace's dad, Grandpa Gibb. He was in his eighties. He planted a church, pastored there for 40-some years. It's called The Trinity Church. We've named this church in honor of her mom and dad.

Pastor Mark:

And it was after Christmas, and Grandpa Gibb had some ongoing health problems. We went away for a vacation with the kids in California. He was up in eastern Washington. And we got the call: "Grandpa Gibb is not doing well. This looks like the end." He took a very quick turn for the worst. So we had to get the kids, get to the airport, get on a plane, fly out, get in the car, drive three-plus hours through the snow to get to the bedside, to say goodbye to Grandpa Gibb. And we got to say our final goodbyes to him, though at that point, he could not talk and could not speak to us, but we know that he loved us. And we know that he loved the Lord Jesus.

Pastor Mark:

But that's where they find themselves. If you've ever been there, the hospital visit, the last goodbyes, the everyone cries and says their final words, that's where we find ourselves in this text. "Behold, your father is ill. So he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And it was told to Jacob, 'Your son, Joseph, has come to you.' Then Israel summoned up his strength and he sat up in bed." So he's going to go out with his boots on. He's going to go out with his dignity intact. And he sits up in bed. At this point, he's 147 years of age. So this is an old man. I mean, you can't even put all those candles on his cake, because there's no way he can cause that much air to come from his lungs to blow them all out. That's just cruel to the old guy. He's 147.

Pastor Mark:

And so Joseph here is his son, and he's about my age. He's in his forties. And his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, their names mean forgetful and fruitful. And at first you read that, you're like, "Why would you call your kid forgetful? That's kind of weird." It's a good out for the kid. "Where's your homework?" "I don't know. But you prophesied it over me. I forget a lot of things." So what it was though is it was a

blessing. Joseph had had some very hard years. His brother had betrayed him. His brothers had sold him into slavery. He'd been falsely, wrongly accused and convicted of rape and thrown in prison.

Pastor Mark:

He spent some very painful, difficult arduous years, but when God gave him a wife and two sons, he realized that this was God's blessing. And he named his one son forgetful, meaning, "I now forget all the pain in my past. That's been healed." And the other is fruitful. "I'm looking forward to the future that God has for me and my family." So this was prophetic and this was him praising God for the provision of his two sons. And these are not little boys.

Pastor Mark:

When you hear this story, you can get this impression. These are grown guys. This would be like my two oldest sons, who are both taller than me, which is not a huge accomplishment ... You're not going to get drafted in the NBA because you're taller than me. But if you go over six foot in my family, it's a big deal. We just look at you, "How is it up there?" Because we've never been there. And so I'm now raising giraffes. I have two sons that I look up to. And they've now got beards and they drive themselves around and they're full guys. And so that's where his sons are.

Pastor Mark:

So when you think of the story, think of a very old grandpa, think of a dad who's about my age, and two sons who are about the age, roughly, of my son; my sons, I should say. So here's a little bit about Jacob. Up until this point, he's not been a very impressive character. Some of you are older and you've wasted a lot of years and you should have been investing those years. And there's hope for us all in the story of Jacob. First of all, when he was growing up, he had a brother named Esau. And dad really liked Esau and mom really liked Jacob. Jacob was kind of the mama's boy. Esau was dad's son. So it says in the Hebrew Old Testament that Esau drove a truck, he carried a side arm, he hunted with a bow. He ate a lot of meat. And he was really good in a fist fight. Jacob, it says, drove a Prius and he was a vegetarian. And he could watercolor exceedingly well. So it says in the Hebrew.

Pastor Mark:

And so what happened was dad really liked Esau and mom really liked Jacob. So the family was divided and the parents played favorites. So the result is that mom and Jacob devised a scheme to trick dad into taking the blessing that rightfully belonged to the other son. So, he's a trickster. He's a dishonest guy in his earliest days. Furthermore, as he is growing up, then he falls in love with a gal and he is smitten with her and he wants to marry her. So he undergoes this number of years serving this man named Laban for the right to marry his daughter. You know the story. He has the wedding, they enter into the covenant. They consummate it. He wakes up the next day and Laban tricked the trickster, swapped out the sisters.

Pastor Mark:

How many of you guys are young and you're like, "I can't wait to get married"? Imagine you got married and it's your honeymoon night. And your new wife is like, "I'm shy. Keep the lights off." And then you wake up the next morning. You're like, "Wrong girl, wrong girl, wrong girl, wrong girl, wrong girl." You're like, "What happened?" "My dad swapped us." "Oh, now I'm married to the wrong girl." That's Jacob. So then he goes back to Laban. He's like, "You tricked me." And he's like, "Well, I tricked the trickster. I tricked the trickster. And if you want to marry the other sister, you need to work for more years."

Pastor Mark:

So he does. But now he's got two wives, which is too many. And you can see the mushroom cloud starting to form over this family. He ultimately ends up marrying two sisters. How many of you are glad that your husband didn't also marry your sister, right? Awkward. And if they did, we'll meet you afterward, because you need immediate counseling, and we'll help with that. But he ends up, before it's all said and done, he dies away ... rather, his mother dies while he's away, so he doesn't get to say goodbye to his mom. He ends up having two wives, two concubines, 13 kids, 12 boys, one girl. Total nightmare, disaster, chaotic, crazy family. His one daughter, Dinah is a rape victim. The brothers get so angry that they then go and murder and slaughter an entire town. His oldest son is so godless that God kills his two sons. In addition, Reuben, one of his other sons, sleeps with one of his concubines.

Pastor Mark:

This family is a dumpster fire. That's what I'm saying. It is a mess, a massive mess. And he is a very passive man. He just kind of sits back in his chair, pulls the lever, and watches it all unfold and says and does very little, is not actively worshipping or pursuing God. And then all of a sudden, he loses Joseph, who was his favorite. He thinks that Joseph is dead. He realizes that ultimately the sons lied to him and betrayed their brother. And now a famine hits and he has moved from the promised land to Egypt during the famine. He's reunited with Joseph. The family is growing in their spiritual maturity. He is here starting to lead. He is worshipping God. He's acknowledging his failures. At this point in his life, he has made some progress.

Pastor Mark:

For those of you, those of us that are older, it's never too late to turn to God and turn things around. That's the moral of the story. Jacob was a late bloomer, but as long as there is air in your lungs, there is hope for your legacy. And so he makes some transition and some improvement. And here he is, a fairly godly man. Now this being said, it's kind of like, what's happening here, kind of like a relay race. Any of you run track in high school? I obviously did not, but my wife did and my daughter did. So when I first met Grace, we were in high school and she was a sprinter, and she also ran the relay. She was an all-state sprinter. And then God gave us Ashley, and Ashley was fast and she was an all-state sprinter and also ran the relays.

Pastor Mark:

And so I've spent a little bit of time watching relay races. And what's really vital in a relay race is that moment of the handoff. That's really where the race is won or lost. That's really where it's won or lost. And what we see here is Jacob is calling Joseph and the grandsons into his presence. And then next week you'll see that he calls the remainder of the sons and the family into his presence. And this is where the baton is being handed off from one generation to another. And the point in a handoff is this, you need to know who you're handing it to, right? From one generation to the next, who's going to be the leader, right? Who's going to be the executor of the will? That would be our current nomenclature. That's Joseph's role and responsibility. He's meeting with Joseph first, saying, "Here's the will. Here are my directives. You are now the one to execute on these responsibilities. I'm leaving this responsibility to you." He's handing the baton to Joseph.

Pastor Mark:

So it's key to hand off the baton. It's key to know who to hand it to. You can't hand it off too early, because they're not ready. You can't hand it off too late. Things are a mess. And you can't drop the

baton. You can't drop the baton. Some of you, the reason that you have problems and pains in your family is because they weren't thinking in terms of legacy. All they were thinking about is their lap around the track. And then at the end, they just drop the baton and go home. And then you've got to pick it up and figure out, "Well, what are we doing? Where's the will? Where's the plan? What happens to the estate? Where are we going? What are we doing?"

Pastor Mark:

Jacob here is taking responsibility for his family. And you and I need to start to think, not just in terms of a good time, but in terms of a good legacy. And I especially want to appeal to the men, the husbands and the fathers that are present with us today, that your family is ultimately your responsibility in the sight of God. And that sometimes the problems that we have is because the generations before us did not think in terms of legacy. This is why here at The Trinity Church, we say we open our Bibles to learn, we open our lives to love, so that lives and legacies are transformed. Not just your life, but your legacy, your kids and your grandkids, or even spiritually, those that are like spiritual children and grandchildren, people that you introduce to the Lord and help raise them up spiritually. So this can be physical and spiritual development of the next generation.

Pastor Mark:

Part of the problem that we have in our culture is people don't think generationally and they don't think in terms of legacy. That's why one of my least favorite bumper stickers is, "We are spending our children's inheritance." Proverbs says that a wise man leaves an inheritance for his children's children. What that means is that someone who is wise is trying to think, "How do I hand the baton to my kids, and how did they hand it to my grandkids so that we get more than one lap around the track, that we extend our wealth financially, that we extend our experience spiritually into the future, into the future, into the future?"

Pastor Mark:

And Jacob here is in the process of doing precisely that. And so he continues, verse three, "Jacob said to Joseph, 'God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me.'" Here's what he says. "God showed up in my life, and he's only and always been good to me." And what he's saying is this, "There is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and now Joseph and his sons." Do you see all the generations? This is legacy. And what he's saying to Joseph and his sons is, "Here's the God that I worship. This is the God that your grandpa worshiped. This is the God that your great-grandpa worshiped. And he shows up in our life and he blesses us. This God is good. I'm telling you grandsons, you can depend on this God. He's a good God. He's always been good to our family. Let me tell you how he has showed up in my life so that you trust him to show up in your life."

Pastor Mark:

And what he is inferring is this, "Even though I will not be with you, God will be with you." It's very important that people know that, that even if your parent, grandparent is no longer present, God is always present. He'll never leave you, never forsake you. And this is what Jacob is referring to. He goes on: "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you.'" Right now, they're a family of 70. By the time they leave Egypt, in the book of Exodus, 400 years later, they are a nation of a few million. God multiplies them. "And I will make you a company of peoples, will give you this land to your offspring, and for you an everlasting possession."

Pastor Mark:

It's not in your notes, but there's six things that I want to make note of that your family needs. The first is your family needs to hear your testimony. Here's what grandpa's doing. He's saying, "All right, let me tell you about my relationship with God. I've not always been faithful to God. God's always been faithful to me. I've not always pursued God. God's always pursued me. I'm a late bloomer, but God's patience and grace has brought me to this day. Let me tell you about my walk with God." You need to tell your children when God showed up in your life and how God has made a difference in your life. You grandparents need to tell your story.

Pastor Mark:

Sometimes you can do this verbally. That's amazing. Sometimes you can write this down so that even after you're gone, the story continues. You can even do this today via video. This may even be taking a few minutes and just sharing your testimony so that long after you're gone, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren can hear the story of when God showed up in your life and how God made a difference in your life. How many of you right now, that would be your most treasured possession, if your mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, great-grandma, great-grandpa ... if you actually had a testimony written down in their own hand of how God showed up in their life and the difference that he made, or even a video where you got to hear with your own ears and see with your own eyes their testimony of God's faithfulness to you?

Pastor Mark:

Jacob takes this opportunity. He doesn't miss this opportunity. My kids know how God showed up in my life as a college freshman, and the difference that he's made in our marriage and in our life. The kids know that Grace's mom and dad were believers. They loved the Lord and served in ministry, and how God has done a remarkable work in my family to where my siblings and my mom and dad all are walking with the Lord. And it's just a testimony of God's grace to our whole family. And what I tell the kids is, "You see, you're not the first one to get the baton and run around the track. Mom and dad love Jesus, grandma and grandpa love Jesus. You guys are ... you're down the line, but we want you to run your race."

Pastor Mark:

And this is the exact same language that the apostle Paul uses to explain and articulate his life. At the end of his life, he says, "I have run my race." And what Jacob is saying here is, "Okay, it's transition time, son, grandsons. I've run my race. It's time for you to run your race. Here's my testimony. You need to now live your life as a testimony." And I've told you this before, but the difference between a biography and a testimony is who gets the credit for all the good things that happen. A biography is, "Here's what I did to fix my life." A testimony is, "Here's what God did to fix my life." In a testimony, God is the hero. In a biography, I am the hero.

Pastor Mark:

Jacob here starts with a testimony, not a biography. He tells them who God is and what God does. The first thing is, your children, your grandchildren. They need to hear your testimony. And I would include this as well, don't be afraid to share those things that are wrong, sinful, rebellious, and/or foolish, as is age appropriate, not to crush or burden your children, but to show them, "I made these mistakes. God was gracious to correct them. Please don't go back. Please go forward. If you go back to the things that I was doing before the Lord fixed me, what we're doing is we're running our race, and then one

generation starts running the wrong direction. We don't go backward. We go forward. This is the progress that our family has made, and I need you to continue."

Pastor Mark:

The story continues, verse 5, "And now your two sons who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt are mine, Ephraim and Manasse shall be mine as Reuben and Simeon are. And the children that you fathered after them shall be yours. They shall be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance." This is here, legal language. What he's saying is this, "Okay, Joseph, you're going to be the executor of my will and estate." Do you even know who that is? Do you have a will? Is your life insurance up to speed? Does your spouse, your kids, your grandkids know the passwords to your computer and your accounts? And what he's saying is, "Here's all the information. And Joseph, here's what's going to happen."

Pastor Mark:

Typically, the 12 boys would inherit the estate. That includes all the assets, the financial portfolio, the promised land that is back in their home country, as well as whatever else they have accrued in the family business. And the two grandsons would typically not be listed in the inheritance. And Jacob here is saying, "I'm going to let you know this before we call the rest of the family in, but your two boys are now included. They're included." This is legal language that they're getting the position of a son, not just a grandson. And what's interesting is that these two boys, they're not entirely Hebrew. They're partially Egyptian. Joseph was Hebrew. His wife was Egyptian. And so these are not purely Hebrew children, but they are, by faith, fully devoted to the Lord and worshipers of God. They worship the God of Joseph. They worship the God of Jacob. They worship the God of this family, not the other side of the family.

Pastor Mark:

Here's the deal. Joseph didn't get to ultimately pick his wife. It was basically chosen for him, and it was the daughter of a pagan high priest. So this is kind of ... How many of you have got an awkward family dynamic? You're like, "We love the Lord, and they're warlocks. Okay. Well, they're really good at Halloween, but not so good at Easter, right?" So that's kind of the dynamics of Joseph's family: "On one side, we all love and serve God. On the other side, grandpa is a pagan priest." The question is, who do these children belong to? They belong to the Lord, and Joseph leads his family.

Pastor Mark:

And looking at this, Jacob says, "These are godly young men. We need to empower them for the next generation." And he mentions his two sons, Simeon and Reuben. Simeon was a violent man. Reuben was a perverted man who slept with one of his dad's concubines. And he's not going to disown them, but they're not going to be in the privileged position for the waterfall of the inheritance because he is looking for a legacy.

Pastor Mark:

Number two, your family needs you to have a plan. Do you have a plan? Do you have a plan for your family? Jacob here is articulating the plan. Everybody's going to ... "All my 12 sons will be in the inheritance, but Joseph, you're the executor of the will. And the will includes a provision for your two sons, because they're godly, good guys. And I want this family to continue. And two of my sons, I love them, but they're still not doing that great. So I can't trust them to lead the family into the future. Instead, I need your sons to be part of the future for the family." He has a plan.



Pastor Mark:

Do you have a plan? Mom, dad, do you have a plan? Grandma, grandpa, do you have a plan? Is the plan written down? Is the plan articulated? Does the family know the plan? Because sometimes what happens if there is not a plan, there is a problem. How many of you have had a loved one, don't raise your hand, especially if they're here, but they're near the end or the end has come and nobody knows what the plan is? It leads to a lot of conflict, "I should get this. I should get that," and it leads to an argument and a fight.

Pastor Mark:

This family has already had a lot of conflict and betrayal, and Jacob, with a plan, is trying to prevent that from happening again. He's taking responsibility as the leader. Verse 7, "As for me, when I came from Paddan, to my sorrow, Rachel died in the land of Canaan on the way when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, that is Bethlehem. And I buried her there on the way." Who's he talking about? He's talking about his wife. 147 year old man, virtually blind, on his deathbed, starts talking about his girl, his dream girl. That was Joseph's mom, Rachel. He's missed his wife. She's been gone a long time. He's missed his wife the whole time.

Pastor Mark:

What he's saying is, "Joseph, I sure miss your mom." I have asked the Lord that I would outlive Grace so that I could make sure that she was taken care of till the very end. That's been one of my prayers since I met her. But I know that it'll be very lonely if God answers that prayer. First time I read this this week, I probably started crying. How beautiful is it that a man loves a woman all the days of his life? He loves her. Even when she is not present with him, he misses her. Some of you know what that's like. You've lost a loved one. You've lost a spouse. There's an ache. There's a lack. There's a loss. There's a mourning. There's a grief. There's a loneliness, because when the two become one, if one goes away, the other feels a bit of themselves is now gone.

Pastor Mark:

Here's the big idea. Your children need to know how you feel about your spouse. Some of you say, "I don't like them." Well, then fix it and then talk about it, okay? I tell my kids all the time, "I sure love your mom. She's the greatest." Sometimes the kids will come home from school or sports and be like, "Oh, so-and-so's parents are getting divorced." And I don't mean to judge anyone, and I know life is complicated and I don't want to make any blanket statement, but I say, "Well, how can we pray for your friend? And how can we support your friend?" And then I always ask the kids, I've asked them since they were little, "Do you ever worry about that with me and your mom?" And they laugh and they're like, "No, you guys love each other. And you'd be a mess without each other." All true.

Pastor Mark:

All true. But I want them to know that I love their mom. When the kids are little and you come home, you give each other a big kiss and you hug each other and you get a little affectionate. What do the kids say? "Oh, knock it off." What they mean is, "Thank you. My life now has a center." Okay? Our youngest daughter, I'll never forget, she's the very affectionate, huggy kissy. When I came home, she runs out to me. I said, "You ready for your kiss and your hug?" And she said, "Yeah, daddy, right after your beautiful wife." She wanted to make sure that mom always gets the first hug and the first kiss.

Pastor Mark:

If you're married or engaged, I want you to hold hands with the person that you're engaged to or married to. How do you feel about that person right now? Are you proud of the way that you feel about them? Are you proud of the relationship that you have? You don't know when the last day will be. So this would be the best day to make sure that whatever needs to be forgiven is forgiven and whatever needs to be resolved is resolved. There's going to be a day that one of you is going to bury the other. And between that day and this day, fighting should not be the predominant use of your time and energy. I don't want to betray anyone's confidence, but I was up front after the first service and a couple came up to me and they said, "We flew in from Texas. We filed for divorce. We've listened to you for years. And we decided that before the divorce was finalized, we would fly to Scottsdale and hear you preach sermon and then figure out what we do next."

Pastor Mark:

They've got children that are involved. They've got a legacy that they were not perhaps considering to the degree that they should have. If you can speak well of your spouse in front of your children, you will cause momentum for the future of your family legacy. And if you're not at a place that you can do that, then I want you to covenant in the presence of God that you will do all you can to get there as soon as you can. This is Jacob articulating his great affection for his devotion to his wife. I pray for us, men, that we would all grow old, falling deeper in love, closer to, more satisfied with, more joyful in the presence of our wife than even when we began our race together as a young couple. These things matter. And I love the fact that he is saying this in front of his son and his grandsons because he is training them to love their wives and to build a legacy.

Pastor Mark:

Let me pray for you real quick, and then we'll continue. Father God, I pray for the couples that are here. Lord, there are some that are here physically, but they're not fully here together emotionally, spiritually. Lord God, bitterness has come in. Hurt has come in. Betrayal has come in. Disappointment has come in. Lord God, there are some couples here that are living parallel lives when you intend for them to be one. There are some here, Lord God, that are not thinking in terms of their lineage and their legacy and their children and their grandchildren.

Pastor Mark:

I pray against the enemy of servants, their works and effects. I pray for the presence of the holy spirit to bring unity, to bring forgiveness, to bring love, to bring healing in the strong name of Jesus. Lord God, this family was doomed for destruction, but as Jacob said, you showed up and you blessed them. Lord God, I think of the first time that the Bible mentions blessing, it's with Adam and Eve. It says that you made them, Lord, and then you blessed them, in Genesis 1. I pray for your blessing on these couples. I pray for your blessing on these marriages. I pray for your blessing on these families. I pray for your blessing on these legacies.

Pastor Mark:

And Lord God, we know that Satan didn't even show up until Adam and Eve were married. The Bible goes from chapter 2, a wedding, to chapter 3, a war. And so we rebuke you, Satan, in the strong name of Jesus. These marriages, these families, these households, these children, these grandchildren, they belong to the Lord. They're not your possession. And in these families, you hold no position. And so I pray against the bitterness. I pray against the hurt. I pray against the ways that the enemy has been welcomed into the family. And I pray, Lord God, that there would be healing in the strong name of Jesus

and these relationships and families, and that healing would continue for generations, continuing to love and serve the God of their fathers and mothers and grandfathers and grandmothers. In the strong name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Mark:

I didn't intend to pray for you, but I just felt like you needed it. The story continues. He continues in verse 8. "When Israel saw Joseph's son, he said, 'Who are these?'" He's old. He can't see. I'm 47. I can't see. He's 147. I don't think if you put a hundred years on me, I'm going to be seeing any better, all right? I mean, I don't know why in Arizona, either, your driver's license doesn't expire. Have you noticed that? And you can text while driving. Man, it's just not a good idea. You've got old people who can't see that are texting and driving.

Pastor Mark:

So he's 147 years of age, and he can't see. So he's got Joseph's sons there. He says, "Who are these?" He can't see them. Joseph said to his father, "These are my sons whom God has given me." Where do your children come from? The Lord? And he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may" ... What? "Bless them. Bless them. Now, the eyes of Israel were dim with age so that he could not see. So Joseph brought them near him and he kissed him."

Pastor Mark:

Is it okay for a grandpa to lovingly, appropriately kiss his grown grandsons on the top of the head and tell him he loves him? Yep, never too old for that. And he embraced him. He hugged him. Is it a good idea for a father to put his arms around his children with loving affection rather than put his hands on his children in anger? Yeah. I'll never forget, I was a little boy. I was at a kid's house and I saw ... one of the sisters of this boy was a friend of mine. The dad was nearby and she wasn't really paying attention. And he said something and he put his hand out. The little girl flinched away from her dad in terror.

Pastor Mark:

And I remember as a little boy seeing that thinking, "He hits her. He lays hands on his daughter." I remember thinking to myself, "I'm going to make sure my daughter never flinches when I become a dad." I used to try this as a little test when I was little with my daughters. If they were nearby, I'd put my hand out and they would walk up and they'd put their face in my hand. Men, this needs to be the safest place on earth for your children. This needs to be the safest place on earth for your children. It should always be this. It should never be this. It should always be this. He hugs them. He embraces them. He is safe, loving, present.

Pastor Mark:

"And Israel said to Joseph, 'I never expected to see your face.'" This is amazing. He's like, "'I thought you were dead, son. I never thought I'd see you. And now not only do I get to see you, I get to know your sons, my grandsons. And behold, God has let me see your offspring also.' Then Joseph removed them from his knees." Where are the boys sitting? On 147 year old grandpa's knees like Christmas Santa at the mall. And these are grown boys. These are big dudes. And he's like, "All right, this is a beautiful moment.

You're going to crush grandpa. It's time to get up." How many of you are at that age? You're like, "Oh, sit on my lap. Okay, we're good now." All right?

Pastor Mark:

"And he bowed down with his face to the earth." How long do you think it took 147 year old man to get down? Took a while. And it probably was a little bit of shaking going on, right, little bit of Elvis going on. I mean, he's got a little ... I'm sure Joseph is like, "I hope he makes it." And they're all probably watching. It probably took a while. So here's grandpa. Grandpa's making his way down, to what? To worship God. Here's what it says.

Pastor Mark:

"He bowed himself with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right. And he brought them near. Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands, for Manasseh was the first-born." It was typical that the first-born would receive the first blessing. And then the second-born would receive the second blessing. And he goes to bless them. He crosses his hands, because you need to know God's will.

Pastor Mark:

There is no sense of entitlement in the kingdom of God. God chooses whomever he chooses to lead for whatever reasons that he determines are necessary and reasonable. How does he know what God's will is? He knows what God's will is because he is worshiping God. Some of you want to know God's will. Well, the key to knowing God's will is to worship in God's presence. So here is my fourth point for your family. Your family needs to see you worship. Your family needs to hear your testimony. Your family needs to know your plan. Your family needs to know that you love your spouse. Your family needs to see you worship

Pastor Mark:

147 year old man, face down, worshiping God in the presence of his son and grandsons. How powerful is that? This is what a man does when he surrenders. The key to being a great man and the leader of your home is to first surrender to the Lord. Some of you struggle to worship physically and demonstrably. The Bible commands us to shout to the Lord, to sing, to clap our hands, to raise our hands. And some people say, "I don't do that." Well, then you're not biblical, because sometimes the posture of the body reveals the disposition of the heart. He is not afraid or ashamed, even as 147 year old man. In that culture, these men, they walked, they did not run. You bowed down to them. They did not bow down to you. This was a high culture of Eastern honor.

Pastor Mark:

But Jacob realizes, "The best thing I can do now is to worship in the presence of my son and grandsons." Because here's the key, if you want your children and grandchildren to be worshipers, you need to be a worshiper. Okay, let me give a strong rebuke to the valley. This is a consumer culture where, particularly in Scottsdale, there is this prevailing thought that, "My job as a man is to make enough money to pay for a good school, find a good youth group and a good sports coach to teach my children to be godly." It is your responsibility, if you are the mother, father, grandmother, grandfather.

Pastor Mark:

This is why some have asked, "Why don't you do a junior high service and a high school service and have all the generations separated?" I don't think that's sinful or evil, but I want your kids to watch you worship. I want your kids to watch you listen to the word of God. I want your kids to see you pray to God as is appropriate, to raise your hands as is necessary, to get down on your knees to partake of communion, showing that you are a sinner and Jesus' broken body and shed blood is for you as well. Because at the end of the day, we worship as we see our parents worship.

Pastor Mark:

Particularly for you, men, your sons will want to be like you, your daughters will marry someone like you. So if they don't see you worship, you're not going to have worship in your legacy. If they don't see you open the word of God, you're not going to have an open scripture in the legacy and future of your family. And what happens oftentimes is parents, particularly fathers, think, "I don't know what went wrong. I found a great school and I found a great coach and I found a great student ministry. And I don't have great kids." Maybe because you weren't a great parent. And the parent is always the dominant force in the life of the child. The parent always has the ongoing relationship, the access and the opportunity.

Pastor Mark:

I don't think there's anything wrong with children's ministry. I don't think there's anything wrong with student ministry. I don't think there's anything wrong with a godly coach. I don't think there's anything wrong with finding a great school, but nothing replaces the role of parents and grandparents. Nothing replaces the role of parents and grandparents, and Jacob here is modeling this. He is worshiping God in the presence of his son, that's training his son, and in the presence of his grandsons. He is training two generations to ensure that they continue their race around the track and that the worship of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob doesn't stop, but it continues to Joseph and his sons. Does this make sense?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Mark:

Let me just speak to the men. You have an opportunity to lead your family, not in a way that is domineering but humble, not in a way that makes your family follow God, but invites your family to follow you as you follow God. But many men, they saw off the very limb that they sit upon. "Read the Bible." "You don't, dad." "Well, worship God." "Well, you don't, dad." "Well, be invested and involved in Christian community." "But you don't, dad."

Pastor Mark:

And this is the crisis. This is the absolute crisis in the culture, the absence of loving, humble, godly, exemplary fathers and grandfathers. Joseph is a great godly man who's faithful to his wife, leading his children. Jacob has made some course corrections. He is now walking with the Lord and he has set an example of worship for three generations. This is the crisis in our day. It hit me this week, our youngest son, Gideon, he's in sixth grade. And they have the transition time where they sort of have a get together at their school where the fathers show up and there's a talk, and then the dads and sons process. And then the fathers get up and publicly pray and declare a blessing over their sons.

Pastor Mark:

There's about, I think, 60 boys in the grade. Over 90% of them had a father who took the day off work, who loves the Lord, who showed up to pray over and bless his son. That was remarkably encouraging to see. And I pray that it'd be true for all of our children and our grandchildren. Let me say this too, for some of you, this will elicit some sort of resentment or discontentment. Some bitterness could come up in your soul because you think, "Man, I wish I had parents like that, grandparents like that. I wish I had a dad like that. I wish I had a granddad like that." If you didn't have that, then be that. If you didn't have that, then be that.

Pastor Mark:

And you may say, "You know what? The baton is on the ground. And I have started my race late, but you know what? I'm going to run as fast as I can. And I'm going to hand it to my kids and grandkids. And I'm going to encourage them to love and serve the Lord. And we're going to see if this family can make a little progress, because if I didn't get a baton handed to me, I will make sure that I hand a baton to my children and grandchildren." Some of you men need to forgive your father. You need to get over your bitterness. You need to get on with your future. Just because you didn't have it doesn't mean you can't be it.

Pastor Mark:

That's the story of Jacob. He was not a great man, but he has made great progress. And then he is going to pray a prayer of blessing over his sons, verse 15. "He blessed Joseph and said, 'The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked'" ... Do you see the generational legacy? That's what he's talking about. "The God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day" ... They're a family of shepherds. They know what shepherds are and do. Shepherds go out and devote their life to protecting the sheep. The sheep don't know where they're going, the sheep don't know what they're doing. The sheep are very vulnerable. So the shepherd is there to lead them, guide them, provide for them and protect them. And what he's saying is this, "Not only were we shepherds. We're sheep, and God has been our shepherd." And he's here referring and inferring to the coming of Jesus, who is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

Pastor Mark:

What he's telling his sons and grandsons is this, "Without God's involvement, without Jesus' investment, we are not the kind of family we are today. And we do not have the future that we're looking forward to. The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys. And in them, let my name be carried on and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

Pastor Mark:

The fifth thing, your family needs to hear you pray. Your family needs to hear you pray. If there's a mom in the home, kids need to hear her pray. If there's a dad in the home, kids need to hear him pray. If there are godly grandparents involved in the life of the child, they need to hear them pray. Jacob here is praying over, praying for his children and also grandchildren. He's praying for the generations and the legacy. Praying together is the closest way to build trust and intimacy because it's inviting the presence of God. And Jacob here is not just talking to, but he's praying with.

Pastor Mark:

Some of you parents, grandparents, this is your problem. You're always talking to the child or children. You're not praying with the child or children. There's some things you need to stop talking about and just start praying about, and it'll change the temperature and the tone in the relationship. Here he is praying over them, but he's praying a blessing over them. Some of you have never had a parent or a grandparent pray over you. Some of you have. If you've received that, you've been tremendously blessed. If you've not had that, you can be that. And again, Joseph is a grown man. Do you ever get too old for your parents to pray for you? Answer, no. Are you ever too young and strong and independent that grandma or grandpa praying for you isn't welcomed and received? It's always a good thing.

Pastor Mark:

Let me say this, too. We want to honor the older people at this church. We want to be a multigenerational church, but we believe it's very important to have Jacobs and Josephs and Ephraims in the house. We believe that bad things happen when it's all old people or it's all young people. We believe that generations together is part of the way that God intends for the family of God to be.

Pastor Mark:

The story then continues. "When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim," verse 17, "it displeased him." He's thinking, "Dad's got this all wrong." How many of you felt that about your dad? You ever felt like your dad got something wrong? Did your dad ever disagree? They're going to have a little conversation. "It displeased him. He took his father's hand and moved it from Ephraim head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, 'Not this way, dad. That's the first-born. You're blind. That's the second one.' His father refused and said, 'I know what I'm doing, boy.'" Right?

Pastor Mark:

See, all that argument with your dad, that's just biblical. That's how this goes, right? Here, they're praying and worshiping and still having that kind of conversation, right? The family's healed, but not fully resurrected yet. There's still some work to do. His father refused and said, "I know, boy. I know. He shall become a people. He shall be great. He'll be fine. Nevertheless, the younger brother shall be greater and his offspring shall be a multitude of nations. So he blessed them that day saying, 'By you, Israel, we'll pronounce blessings and saying, 'God make you, Ephraim, as Manasseh.' Therefore, he put Ephraim before Manasseh."

Pastor Mark:

Here's the big idea. Your family needs a leader. Up until this point, he's been a very passive men, and the boys led, and it was a complete nuclear meltdown, dumpster fire, prison riot, mattresses on fire kind of family. It was a real situation. He's now leading. Your family needs a leader. We believe in singular headship, plural leadership. In the godhead, there's God the father, God the son, God the holy spirit. There is singular headship, plural leadership. In the family, there is singular headship, plural leadership. In the church, in business, whatever the course may be, God's intended order is singular headship, plural leadership. Somebody's got to be the leader. Here, Jacob is finally leading his family.

Pastor Mark:

And Joseph is saying, "This is how it's supposed to go." And he's says, "No, no, no. I know the will of God. It's going to go like this. This is God's will. I'm the leader, right? I'm the umpire. It's nothing until I call it. I'm calling it now. This is what God wants." This avoids all the fighting in the family. You can imagine the conflict and controversy if Jacob doesn't lead and make the decisions. Some of you know exactly what

this looks like because in your family, the parents won't make a decision. They won't lead. They can't figure it out. And as a result, everybody's arguing and fighting. Here, Jacob gets the whole family in order. "Here is God's will for us. This is what we're doing." Finally, the family has a leader.

Pastor Mark:

And then next week you'll see his words to the rest of the family. But here's how he closes. "Then Israel said to Joseph, 'Oh, one more thing, boy. Behold'" ... This is when an old guy is going to tell a story, right? "Behold, I'm about to die." He's pretty clear on this. "But God will be with you." What he's saying is this, "Son, I can't be here anymore, but God will never leave you." Isn't that good news?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Mark:

Because some of you are like, "Man, when I lose my family, I lose my parents, my grandparents, whomever, my spiritual mentor, what then?" God will never leave you. God will be with you and bring you again to the land of your fathers. "Eventually son, make sure everybody remembers, we've got to get back to the promised land. That's where God wants us to be." It's ultimately going to be more than 400 years, but the family goes back to the promised land. "Moreover, I have given to you, rather than to your brothers one thing. Don't tell them. It's kind of a thing. I own a mountain. I took it from the Amorites with my sword and my bow."

Pastor Mark:

See, this is what old guys do. They get together and tell you the stories about what they did when they were young and strong, right? And sometimes the stories get a little embellished. How many of you've got a dad like that? He's like, "I was the toughest kid in my school." "You were homeschooled with your sister. I feel like you've embellished that story, grandpa." "I was still the toughest kid in my school." "Okay. That's fine if that makes you feel better. Yeah, grandpa was the toughest kid in school. Don't ask any questions about where he went to school."

Pastor Mark:

But here what he's saying is he's like, "When I was was young" ... Because he's with his sons and his grandsons. They're in their power years. He's the old guy. "When I was a young guy, I had a bow and I had a sword. And some guys got in my way and I won. So I own a mountain and you can have it." He's a man. He's going out with his boots on. Even old guys need dignity. Amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Mark:

All the old guys said, "Amen."

Congregation:

Amen.



Pastor Mark:

Okay, there you go. He's going out with his dignity. Okay. Let me hit a couple things in closing. And when I say that, it doesn't mean I'm closing. It just means it's been a while and I need you to pay attention. Okay? So four focuses for the finish line. So here's Jacob. He's at the finish line, right? Number one, be right with God. Is he right with God? He is. He's apologized, repented. He's worshiped God, he's pivoted. He's like, "You know what? I was just sitting on the track. I'm old now, but I got to pick up the baton and I got to start running." He's right with God. Do your best to be right with your family. You can't always make it right with your family. The apostle Paul says, "In so far as it is possible with you, seek to live at peace with all people." But some people, they don't want that.

Pastor Mark:

But has he done all he can to be right with his family? Yeah, he's done all he can. Set up the next generation. Is he doing that? Absolutely. Spiritually, financially, "Here's the baton, need you kids to keep going," and die in faith for what is next. He's not anxious. He's not freaking out. He's not, "Oh my gosh. I hope I don't go to hell. I don't know what's going to happen. I'm panic" ... He's very calm. And what he says is, "I love you boys. I'm going to miss you. But Rachel's waiting for me. I got to go see Jesus. I got to go hang out with Rachel." People ask me, "Are we going to be married in heaven?" There's a big debate on that. Here's what I do know. Grace and I are hanging out. And I'm going to ask Jesus because if she's married to the perfect me, that's going to be amazing for her. Right?

Pastor Mark:

And I want that for her. Her name is Grace. She's already put up with a lot, right? But looking forward to what's next. And here's how the apostle Paul says it, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain." For the non-Christian, this is as close to heaven as you'll ever be and hell awaits you. For the Christian, this is as close to hell as you'll ever be and heaven awaits you.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Mark:

How to be a blessing. Last one, I want to close with this. Five ways to be a blessing. Let me say this. A person who is a blessing is, A, burden-lifting, and B, life-giving. Jacob here is taking a lot of burdens off his sons and grandsons. "Here's the plan. Here's the finances. Here's the will. Here's my directives. Here's the instructions. Here's the leader. This is how it's going to go." Burden-lifting, grace-giving. "I'm going to pray for you. Love you. Bless you. Encourage you. Be generous toward you."

Pastor Mark:

The most dysfunctional families I have ever seen are when the parents or grandparents show up, not to lift the burden, but to be the burden. Our job as parents and grandparents is not to give a burden, but to lift a burden. That's why some of you, getting together with family is very hard, because it's just, "I hate your dad and here's what's going on," and gossip and betrayal and bitterness and hurt. And you're like, "Man, why do you dump it all on me? You're supposed to lift it off of me."

Pastor Mark:

And that's what's supposed to happen. One generation is supposed to give their burdens to the Lord and then turn around and help next generation lift their burdens and give them to the Lord. And then together, go down to the next generation, help them lift their burdens and give them to the Lord. A very unhealthy, dysfunctional family system is, "Here's my burdens. I'll put them on my kids. And then we'll put my burdens and their burdens on the grandkids." If you didn't have that, you can be that. Be a burden-lifter, be a grace-giver.

Pastor Mark:

I've asked the Lord, this has been convicting of me recently as my kids get older, how can I lift a burden? How can I be a help and a blessing? I don't want them getting up every day thinking about my burdens. They've got their own burdens. And as their dad, it's my honor to help lift their burdens, not to be their burden.

Pastor Mark:

How do you be a blessing physically? He hugs him. He kisses them. He lays hands on them. He prays for them. He's safe. Some of you need to hug your kids. Some of you need to hold your grandkids. Some of you need to give them an appropriate affectionate kiss on the head. Physical. Sometimes guys will say, "Well, my family, we don't touch." Well, repent of that. So your dad and your grandpa were dysfunctional. Don't carry that forward. Put that to death.

Pastor Mark:

Verbally, he blesses them. He speaks to them. He prays for them. Some of you need to tell your kids, your grandkids, "I love you. I'm proud of you. I like you. I enjoy you. You're my blessing." You need to speak that life over them. Spiritually, he prays for them. He worships God in front of them. And he invites them to pray and worship the Lord too. Emotionally, he's present. He's affectionate. He's not angry. He's not bitter. He's kind. He's loving. He's compassionate. And financially, he blesses them. "I've got some money. I've got some land called the promised land. I own a mountain. Here's all my assets. And I want to take care of you. And I want to extend the blessing into the future, through your kids and grandkids."

Pastor Mark:

Now, what does this look like? I'll tell you a quick story. Some years ago, there was a guy that I knew, his dad was in the process, was terminal, was kind of down to the last month. And I shared this story before, but I feel like sharing it again. And I think it was a big Italian family. There was a lot of them. And as dad was dying, he would come in to work and he would say, "Oh, you'll never guess what my dad did this week. Dad had that new roof put on the house, had all the hardwood floors sanded and refinished, replaced all the appliances, made sure that all the vehicles were maintained and all the maintenance schedules and oil changes and tuneups were all prepaid and scheduled and on the calendar. Gave mom and us the will, his directives, his intentions, how to care for mom, all the passwords, all the life insurance policies, everything buttoned up."

Pastor Mark:

And he came in one day. He said, "You'll never guess what happened. My dad died." And this was sometime later. He said, "You'll never guess what showed up at my mom's house on her anniversary. Dad ordered flowers every year for the rest of her life on their anniversary with a love letter so that she would know that even if he wasn't there, he was still alive in God's presence, awaiting her and loved

her." Loved her. What that man did was he disciplined all of his sons on how to treat a woman. And he disciplined all of his daughters on what to look for in a man. This is what it means to finish well. You may not be able to do all you can, but you need to do the best you can.

Pastor Mark:

And here's where I want to close. This family brings us to Jesus. And when we see in this story a father, it's to remind us that God is a father. And you need to know that God has a father's heart toward you. When we see Joseph, the beloved son, we're to remember Jesus, the son of God. As we remember that Joseph was betrayed and thrown in a pit and abandoned, falsely accused and tried and left for dead, so was the Lord Jesus, that he was abandoned and betrayed, that he was thrown in the pit, that he was left for dead, but that he came forth to rule and to reign and to be a blessing to the nations of the earth, including our own.

Pastor Mark:

And as we see the story and we see his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, that's you. That's me. That's us. We are with the beloved son. We are brought into the presence of the father who loves us with a father's heart and blesses us. You need to know that God's heart toward you is the same as Jacob's heart toward Joseph and Ephraim and Manasseh, that Jesus is like our Joseph, and that we are like his beloved, blessed sons. Amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Mark:

So we're going to invite the band up at this point. And what's interesting, this week we have a multi-generational band. It's one college student and then all middle school, high school and elementary school kids leading us in worship. Amen? So we're going to increase the cuteness factor right now. And I'll get out of the way so as not to destroy it. So we're going to partake of communion. Remember in the broken body and shed blood of Jesus, that Jesus lifts our burden. He takes away sin, shame and condemnation through his death and resurrection. Jesus is our burden-lifter, and Jesus is our grace-giver, that he is our blessing. We'll partake of communion and we will sing. Let me pray for you.

Pastor Mark:

Father God, thank you so much that I get to teach the Bible here at The Trinity Church. Thank you for these dear people that give me the honor of talking for a long time every week as we work through sections of the scriptures. Thank you for giving us a church home where we can gather together as your sons and daughters, as your beloved and blessed family. Lord, I pray for those that are here, that if they have any angst or anger or bitterness or hurt toward parents, grandparents, that there would be forgiveness and healing. For any who are here, Lord, and they can't speak well of the spouse that they drove here with, that they would do all they can to reconcile and to make the most of the days that they have and invest them rather than waste them.

Pastor Mark:

Lord God, we ask for your presence to be with us as it was with Jacob and Joseph. We ask for your presence to be with our children and our grandchildren. We ask for your presence to be in our midst right now. And father, we thank you that you reveal yourself as father, that your heart is generous. Your

heart is kind. Your heart is to take a burden and give a blessing. And thank you, Lord Jesus, for being that burden-lifter and that blessing. We come now to worship in your presence and in your name as your people, amen.