

The supreme power of Christ

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[0 : 0 0] Let's pray that the Lord would help us to learn from his word this evening. Heavenly Father, we pray indeed that you would make your son real to us this evening.

We pray that you would teach us things about him that we don't know. We pray that you would remind us of things about him that we may have forgotten. And we pray that you would create in us again this evening new confidence and trust in your magnificent son that would go with us into the week ahead and indeed into eternity.

For this we ask in his name. Amen. This was always going to be the hardest part, this remembrance of what lay ahead in the dusk on that night in early June down the dirt road to Nuiarbuie.

How do I do justice to what awaits at the end of this road? Up ahead is the facade of a church built of red sandstone. This is Nuiarbuie, says Frank.

Moses begins to slow down the car and Glenn is preparing his camera to film. As we drive closer, the front porch of the church comes into view. There is a white marble statue of Christ above the door with hands outstretched.

[1 : 3 7] Below it is a banner proclaiming the celebration of Easter. And below that, there is the body of a man lying across the steps. His knees buckled beneath his body.

His arms cast behind his head. Moses stops the car but stays hunched over the wheel. I notice he's looking at his feet. I get out. Weeds and summer grasses have begun to cover the gravel.

Immediately in front of us is a set of classrooms. And next to that is a gateway leading into the garden of the church complex. As I walk towards the gate, I must make a detour to avoid the bodies of several people.

There was a child who's been decapitated. There are three other corpses splayed on the ground. There is a smell unlike anything I've ever experienced. Inside the gate, the dead lie on either side of the pathway.

A woman on her side, an expression of surprise on her face. The corpse of a tall man who lies directly across the path. I look down to my left and see a child.

[2 : 4 1] The body's in a state of advanced decay. And I cannot tell if it's a boy or a girl. I begin to pray to myself. Our Father who art in heaven. These are prayers I've not said since my childhood.

But I need them now. We come to an area of wildly overgrown vegetation where there are many flies in the air. The smell is unbearable here. In front of me I see a group of corpses.

They are young and old, men and women. They're gathered in front of the door of the church offices. How many are there? I think perhaps a hundred, but it's hard to tell. Their bodies seem to be melting away.

Such terrible faces. Horror, fear, pain, abandonment. I cannot think of prayers now. Here the dead have no dignity.

They're twisted and turned into grotesque shapes. And the rains have left pools of stagnant water all around them. They must have fled here in a group. Crowded in next to the doorway.

[3 : 42] An easy target for the machetes and the grenades. We pass a classroom. Inside a mother is lying in the corner. Surrounded by four children. The chalk marks from the last math lesson are still on the board.

We pass a corner. To my left is a large room filled with bodies. There's blood, rust-coloured now, with the passing weeks smeared on the walls. I do not know what to say about the bodies because I've already seen too much.

Those words are contained in the dispatch written by Fergal Keane, BBC correspondent, describing a scene from Rwanda. He concludes this dispatch written in 1994 with these words.

As we turn to go, I look back and in the darkness see the form of the marble Christ gazing down on the dead.

The rats scuttle in the classrooms again. There's a question there, isn't there? Not an accusation, but a question.

[4 : 49] Is anybody there looking down on this? And if there is, does he care?

And can he do anything with his outstretched arms? And if so, why is this allowed?

There are situations in life, are there not, which are way beyond both our control and our understanding. At such times we desperately look for help.

These are the prayers I've not said since my childhood, but I need them now. But at such times understanding deserts us. If there is anyone there to pray to, if there is, what's he doing?

And why is this allowed? And this is not uncommon. That is an extreme example, the one I've just brought to you. But we meet these situations often in life, do we not?

[5 : 53] Whether it's the big natural world things. Earthquakes, Japan, New Zealand, tornadoes in the US. Or whether it's the big human evil things that we see in the world around us.

When evil seems to triumph. When the efforts of good people seem to come to nothing. Or in our own lives. The smaller scale brutalities that come our way, say in the workplace.

Or in our homes. Or the unexpected illness which strikes us or our loved ones out of the blue. Or death. That most indiscriminating of visitors. Such things are all too often totally beyond our influence as human beings.

And they raise the question which is often in the back of the mind of Christian and atheist alike. Is anyone there? Can he do anything? Does he really care about this?

How often we're left like Fergal Keane. Looking back through the gloom at a shadowy Christ. Gazing down on the situation. Looking vaguely compassionate.

[7 : 07] Yet detached. Inactive. Passive. Is he loving enough to care? Is he powerful enough to do anything? Why does God not act?

Does he lack power? Does he lack compassion? Let me say friends. If these are not questions you're dealing with in an active way at the moment in life. They will be. Of course it's not just life in our day that's like that, is it?

We're looking this evening at a series of stories. Long ago. Yet absolutely contemporary. In the sense that each of them is noted for being beyond human control.

I want to make four observations about these stories. And then draw some conclusions for ourselves this evening. First observation. These really are situations beyond human control.

Take a little trip back with me and skim through. Look for example at chapter 4 verse 38. They woke him and said to him, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?

[8 : 13] The professional seamen know that they're out of their depth with this one. It's too big for them. Or look at chapter 5 verse 3. No one could bind him.

Or verse 4. No one had the strength to subdue him. We may not be used in our age to seeing supernatural evil out in the open, as it were, like this.

But the damage and self-destructiveness is obvious enough and common enough. He can't control himself. And no one else can either. Or here's one for all the aspiring physicians among you.

Chapter 5 verse 25. She had suffered much under many physicians and spent all that she had. Important point that.

And was no better, but rather grew worse. Many things have changed in the world since then. But the intractability of disease and the financial acumen of medical practitioners have not changed.

[9 : 15] Or chapter 5 verse 35. There came some from the ruler's house who said, Your daughter is dead. Can you imagine the despair?

He had thought it was going to be okay. Jesus is on the way. We've got there in time. But it turns out that Jesus has come too late. And his little girl is gone. Natural disaster.

Evil. Sickness. Death. Precisely the things that make life so hard. Now we human beings are brilliantly competent in so many areas of life.

But these things belong to a different league. A league in which we cannot play and win. Yet we have to play. Because they don't need an invitation before they come knocking on our door.

Beyond human control. We can imagine all these tragedies happening, can't we? They happen in our own lives. They happen in our world. They have since the beginning. And yet, a situation quite like this is rather difficult to imagine.

[10 : 23] Second observation. There is somebody totally in control of these things. Did you notice Jesus' total control over all of these situations?

In each case, what he does is dramatic, instantaneous, and obviously supernatural. And in each case, the people present react just as we would if we were to see something dramatic, instantaneous, and obviously supernatural.

Let's just wander through them again. Look at how he subdues nature. 439. He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace.

Be still. He wakes up and he talks to the wind and he talks to the water and says, Be quiet. And there is instant calm.

From maelstrom to millpond in a second. Nothing stirs. Now, friends, next time you're feeling particularly on top of life, have a go at that and see how you get on.

[11 : 36] My daughter Harriet tried it, aged about three or four. We just read this story. We went out on a windy day. She stepped out into the gale. She looked around and she said, Be quiet.

Be quiet. Be quiet. Good on her for taking the Bible to heart, but not quite in the right way. I'd have been terrified if the wind had stopped blowing.

Wouldn't you? And the people in the boat are terrified. They do not believe their eyes. Or rather, they do. They believe their eyes exactly.

They believe it's all happened all right. Nobody in the boat is saying, That's a terrific trick. He must have done it with mirrors. I wonder how to learn to do that. They realize that a different sort of person is present.

And it is terrifying for them. Who on earth have we got here? The inanimate world obeys his commands. Or look at how he conquers evil.

[12 : 37] Look at 515, for example. They came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who'd had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind.

And they were afraid. And those who'd seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.

They know something has happened all right. There's no doubt in their minds. And they are afraid, just as we would have been had we seen this man change like that.

We get used to living with people that no one can do anything about. Situations in people's lives that we can't change. And one day, somebody walks in who can transform it with a word.

It's frightening, isn't it? Well, look at how he did what the doctors couldn't do. Chapter 5, verse 33. The woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling.

[13 : 45] She's terrified. And fell down before him and told him the whole truth. She comes up slightly superstitiously, on the quiet, thinking that if she just gets a touch, things might go well.

And she is well, but he knows about it. She thought she could just do it anonymously. But she has to come out in the open because nobody can hide from him. And she's afraid.

And you would be too. Well, look at how he defeats death. 5.42. Immediately, the girl got up and began walking.

Now, this one really is in a different ballpark, isn't it? Nobody is in any doubt that this little girl is dead. Jesus' words to Jairus, not to be afraid, must have seemed hopeless to him, mustn't they?

Everyone thinks she's dead. They all know she's dead. The professional mourners have been, wailers have been wheeled in to do their wailing thing. Everybody knows she's dead. When Jesus says she's not, she's fallen asleep, they all go, come off it.

[14 : 51] We know she's dead. Everyone does. The people in the room who see her get up, they knew she was dead, didn't they? They are completely overcome with amazement, Mark says, when she got up.

Let me say, if you're ill enough to be mistaken for dead, you don't usually immediately get up and walk around. I wonder, friends, if you've ever faced up to this extraordinary person.

that jumps out of the pages the moment you read. You will one day, of course. Have you faced up to this person in life?

Here is a person who can cope with all the things we can't cope with. Cope is not the right word, is it? Here is a person of consummate power, totally in control of all those things over which we have no control whatever.

Jesus has total control. Third observation. These things really happened.

[16 : 05] Everything about the way these accounts are written has the stamp of reality all over it. The people react like real people would, like you or I would. And the whole thing is the mark of the eyewitness about it.

Look at the funny little details that are mentioned of what people saw. Look, for example, at 438. He was in the stern, asleep, on the cushion.

Now, frankly, who cares about the furnishings? It's not an important thing to mention, is it? Who would mention that if the story was being made up? You might embellish other stuff in the story, his appearance or manner, the commanding nature of his words.

But the furnishings, they'd be the last thing in your mind. You wouldn't think about that. Yet somebody remembers it because they were there and they saw it. Or look at 541.

We get the words Jesus spoke, Talitha Kumi. Get up, little girl. Aramaic words stuck in the middle of the Greek text. Why are those words there?

[17 : 08] Well, because somebody heard those words and they were so remarkable that they're reproduced in this version of it. Words like that stick in the mind.

Up you get, little girl. And up she gets. And the whole thing is like that, isn't it? These events are very unusual, but the description smacks of reality.

More than that, it stood the test of time. Because these are not stories which arrive in a neutral atmosphere. Other Gospels were published in a very hostile climate in the first century.

Don't you think somebody might have checked out whether these things really happened? If you ran TV news, you'd be there. If you were a documentary maker, you'd be making documentaries for the rest of your life on whether these things really happened or not.

Striking that we don't have that kind of information from the first century. The point is this. Somebody has walked this earth who with the mere speaking of a word, with the exercise of his mind, can instantly change everything that we can't change.

[18 : 24] Just like that if he wants to. Have you faced up to him? Are you facing up to him now? In the things that life has thrown at you?

You may know this person kind of in theory, but in the difficulties that life is throwing at you now, have you started viewing him a bit like a statue that you can vaguely see through the gloom?

Kind of compassionate looking, but not really doing anything, at least in your mind. Now, of course, this all raises a huge question.

If he can do it, why doesn't he do it more of the time? I mean, if God weren't there, he could get away without doing anything much about the way things were because he's not there.

But if he is there, well, if anything, that makes the question more rather than less difficult. And it was a question back then too. Why is it, for example, in Jesus' own time?

[19 : 31] That he doesn't seem to spend that much time majoring on the things that we would major on had we had that kind of power back then? The relief of suffering, the stopping of catastrophe, the undoing of death.

Why does Jesus not spend more time on those things? He doesn't spend much time doing that in Mark's Gospel, interestingly. In fact, if anything, he does the opposite.

Here's my fourth observation. There is a strange ambiguity about these stories. For on the one hand, things are kept very quiet. And on the other hand, things are made rather public.

Let me explain what I mean. Do you notice how much of this is kept very quiet and private? 439, for example.

Who but the people in the boat will know that Jesus has spoken to the storm? Who will know that? Oh, sure, they'll feel the storm and hear it.

[20 : 33] Sure, they'll experience the fact that the storm has stopped rather suddenly and surprisingly. Yes, they will hear about what Jesus has said second hand, but there are very few eyewitnesses to Jesus saying, quiet, be still, and everything stopping.

After all, there's a storm going on. Who's going to hear those words? Look again at 531. Again, it's terribly private, this.

Huge crowd of people, lots of jostling bodies. Jesus asks, who touched me? And they go, well, come on, what a silly question. Everybody's touching you.

Perhaps not that many people see his conversation with this woman in the pressing crowd. It's all quite quiet. Who else is going to know?

543 is perhaps the most striking of the lot. Chapter 5, verse 43, let me read this. He strictly charged them that no one should know this and told them to give her something to eat.

[21 : 48] He tells them not to say anything to anyone about the raising of this little girl. Now, how is that going to happen? Surely everybody's going to know that this has happened.

You can't go on pretending she's dead, can you? Not for long. But look back to chapter, look back to verse 39. They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, verse 38, and Jesus saw commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.

And when he'd entered, he said to them, why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead, but sleeping. Why say a thing like that?

Everybody knows a dead body when they see one. Do you think if you'd been outside the room on that day and see, sorry, if you'd been in the room and seen the still forms start to breathe and seen the pale skin suddenly flush with colour and the dead body sit up and heard the dead lips speak, there could be no doubting that you'd seen the dead rays, could there?

Think, however, of what would have happened if you hadn't been in the room to see that. The parents and three disciples are in, everyone else is outside.

[23 : 11] If you've been outside and Jesus turns up and you hear him say that she's not really dead, just asleep, and you didn't believe that at the time because everybody thinks she's dead, but then you see her alive the day after, what are you to think?

Well, you'd think, of course, that everybody got it wrong, wouldn't you? That it was a mistake, that she was really asleep or had some strange episode. Do you see how Jesus' words in verse 39 opened the doors for the majority outside to believe that she's not dead after all and that nothing much really happened in there.

Jesus' words are designed to keep it private, to keep it quiet. Why could that be?

I mean, we would not be keeping this quiet if we could do it, would we? You know, raise the dead tomorrow and you might think of making something of that. Well, let me say that all the way through this book, that kind of thing happens and happens again.

all the way through this book, Jesus' attention is focused on a few people who he shows everything to. And so much of what he does is not seen by the general public.

[24 : 36] Why is that? Well, I think the most obvious explanation is that he doesn't wish to be misunderstood. Because he didn't just come into a vacuum, they were expecting someone. God had promised a rescuer, someone who would free them from their oppressors and it seemed that it had become to be thought that the key problem was their political oppressors.

And the main thing that God would do would be to send a great and victorious king to remove the political oppressors and make all well for the nation again. And Jesus seems to resist being misunderstood in this way.

He keeps his identity quiet. He keeps the biggest miracles like this one, very private. He focuses in on these twelve. For someone with such power and influence, he does remarkably few things that are publicly powerful and influential.

He does not wish to be misunderstood because he's come to deal not with the symptoms but with the disease.

Imagine you wake up tomorrow morning with a real stinker of a cold. One of those colds that feel like somebody's injected glue into your nose. You know, that kind of cold. And you think to yourself, what on earth can I do about this?

[26 : 01] So you dash off to the chemist and you buy every cold remedy that you can ever remember being advertised. The nasal spray, the vapour rub, the hot lemon drink, the menthol, sweetie things that taste so unpleasant.

But you do that anyway because you want to feel better. And what do you find? You find you have to do precisely the same thing the next day because all that those things do is they deal with a minor way with the symptoms of the disease but can do nothing about the disease itself.

Well, Jesus has come to deal with the disease not the symptoms. And he doesn't want them to misunderstand the rescue that he's bringing.

And without sounding trite, can I say that all of those things that we find it impossible to control, natural disasters, the progress of evil in the world, sickness, disease and death, are merely the symptoms of the great disease that Jesus has come to deal with.

The disease, of course, being sin, our fractured relationship with God that that has caused. The Bible's view is that all of those things, natural disaster, sickness, evil and death, are symptoms of that terrible disease.

[27 : 24] human antagonism towards God and his role as creator. And all of those things happen because that great central relationship in the universe between God and those made in his image has been messed up and broken.

Not, of course, that each hurrican or each personal example of tragedy is the result of specific sin, but everything, a sign that things are not well between human beings and God.

it is easily possible to look at the symptoms of the disease and get the diagnosis wrong. To look at the world's problems and say the big problem in the world is lack of education or poverty or abuse of power or mistreatment of the environment and not see the real disease behind all of those dysfunctional things.

So why doesn't God take all of those things away right now? Why doesn't he do something? Well, it's not because he doesn't care or because he lacks power, but because he's come to deal with the disease to put real human beings back in relationship with God.

And this is not a solution that they were looking for, at least not in that way. And he wants them to understand properly. Apparently for Jesus the danger of being misunderstood is enough for him to want to keep these amazing miracles private and known only to a few at the time.

[29 : 14] The rescuer is not coming to bring temporary political freedom or temporary relief from suffering or even a temporary resurrection from the dead.

but something much bigger and more far-reaching. The restoration of everything in proper relationship with its creator. And so for the moment, Jesus focuses down his work on a few people.

He teaches them who he is. He teaches them why he's come. He goes all the way to death on a cross to die for the sins of the world in order to deal with the real problem.

But, and here's the ambiguity of this story, he does want to be understood. Notice the different one, the different story.

The very first one. Did you notice the end of that story? Sorry, not the very first one. The Demon Possessed Man, the second story. Did you notice the end of that story?

[30 : 18] Verse 19. He did not permit the man to come with him, but said to him, go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he's had mercy on you.

Now that stands in stark contrast to all of the others. All the others are private, quiet, don't tell anyone. This one is go home and tell everyone. What is the difference between these two stories?

Well, the difference in a phrase is one happens in pig country and the others don't. At least it was pig country before Jesus arrived. No more bacon sandwiches for breakfast in the region of the Gerasenes for some time.

But Jewish people, of course, don't have bacon sandwiches for breakfast. The man, the demon possessed man lives in gentleness and his friends and family are gentile friends and family.

And they don't have all that historical baggage and knowledge of the rescuer that God has promised to send. And so to people like that who won't misunderstand, Jesus says, no, don't come with me.

[31 : 29] Go home and tell everyone what the Lord has done. Do you see the difference? He does want to be made known, but not to be misunderstood. Let me summarise and let's draw some conclusions from these stories.

Four examples of things that we human beings are completely powerless over. Four things in which Jesus demonstrates his absolute power, his total control.

Four events which have the stamp of reality all over them. These things happened. And finally, things that Jesus does want to be understood, but not misunderstood.

Let me say three things by way of conclusion. Let me say a word about the methods that Jesus chooses. At the beginning of chapter four, Jesus teaches his disciples about the power of his word.

You all know the stories if you're familiar with Mark's gospel, the parable of the sower and other parables about sowing seed. Up to this point in Mark's gospel, Jesus has spent the bulk of his time teaching people rather than performing massive miracles.

[33 : 05] And things have not gone well. Chapter one of Mark's gospel starts very well. Dramatic, big things happen, but by the end of chapter two and into chapter three, his teaching ministry has resulted in people simply wanting to murder him.

It's not looking good by the beginning of chapter four. And at the beginning of chapter four, Jesus teaches his disciples that actually his way of doing things, teaching people, will produce a massive harvest in the end.

And these four miracles that follow hot on the heels demonstrate to them the power of his word. In each case, the miracle is done with a word.

Look at verse 39 of chapter four. He awoke and rebuked to the wind and said to the sea, Peace, be still.

He speaks and it happens. Look at 5.8. He was saying to him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit. He speaks and out the spirits come.

[34 : 18] Verse 41, Little girl, up you get. And up she gets. Jesus' words are really powerful. They don't look powerful at this stage of the story.

In fact, his methods look weak and insubstantial. And that continues. For when did death on a cross ever look powerful and substantial?

Jesus' methods don't always look powerful. Let me ask you today, let me ask you, in your life as a Christian, your ministry as a Christian, your ministry as a church, do Jesus' methods look that powerful to you?

Oh yeah, there are successes, aren't there, and encouragements. But aren't there also many discouragements and many disappointments?

If you were God, do you think you'd have things the way they are now in the Church of Scotland? If you were God, would you live with that? It doesn't look powerful, does it?

[35 : 38] haven't you ever asked yourself the question, well, I think this is right, but I do wonder why God dot dot dot, why he lets this or that or the other happen or go unaddressed?

Don't you wonder that? Jesus' methods do not look particularly powerful, do they? Well, a passage like this ought to reassure us just as it ought to have reassured those first disciples that this is a person complete in power and that if he lets things go on to the point where they are at chapter three or to chapter 14 and 15 and death on a cross, if he lets things go on like that not looking visibly very good, it is not because he lacks power to do something about it.

These ought to reassure us about Jesus' methods. Things are the way they are not because he lacks power to deliver.

Second, let me say something about the goodness of God. Sometimes our problem with the way things are in the world or in our lives is not that we doubt God's power to do something.

We know he's big and powerful. We doubt his compassion, his goodness. He may be strong, but he doesn't seem to be paying attention to me or my situation or the nation and its situation.

[37 : 25] I can't imagine how God might have let this happen we say to ourselves. Yes, he may be powerful, but does he really care?

Is he really loving? Verse 38 is a question we so often ask in distress. 438.

Do you not care that we are how we are? Or that this situation is how it is?

And the answer from these four miracles is of course he cares. 538. 538. Before he even gets to the man, he's calling the demons out of him.

515. We see the man clothed and in his right mind. Does Jesus not care about this man? Of course he cares about him. Verse 24.

[38 : 28] Jesus goes with Jairus in his distress. Do you think he doesn't care about Jairus? Of course he does. Verse 34. Go in peace. Do you think he doesn't care about this woman's well-being or confidence?

Of course he does. Verse 36. When they're told that the child is dead, don't be afraid. Do you think he doesn't care about how they are? Of course he cares.

Do you think Jesus doesn't care about your situation or the Church of Scotland situation or the world situation? Of course he does. The minute you see him spring into action, his kindness leaps out and smacks you on the nose.

All of these actions are full of concern and compassion, are they not? see him in action, you see a kind and generous and caring person in action. Sometimes things arise in life that mean waiting with great difficulty and in great pain people.

But his apparent inactivity is not because he does not care. He doesn't heal all the sick or cast out all the demons in Israel in the first century.

[39 : 48] But that isn't a symptom of carelessness, rather of a bigger and much more significant purpose, which in the end will solve all the difficulties of humanity and all the pain through all the centuries of everybody who's ever put their trust in him.

His determination to die for the sins of the world dominates this gospel. and his determination that the world should be saved dominates his activity now.

And that means that some things are not addressed yet, though in the end everything will be addressed. How could a person like this not address everything in the end?

The minute you see him act, his kindness is right out there. Third, a word about the future.

These miracles have in them a little foretaste of heaven. One day, everything will be straightened out with the instantaneous command that all of these stories demonstrate.

[41 : 10] The day when the Lord Jesus returns to make everything new and right every wrong and wipe every tear from every eye that's ever trusted him.

This is like a little thumbnail of how things will be everywhere. You know, thumbnail photos on web pages. You click on the tiny little image and the big one suddenly jumps up in your screen.

That is, if your processor is fast enough. One day it'll be like that. You click on this little story, but imagine everything, everywhere, for all eternity being straightened out in an instant just as these things were straightened out in an instant when he chose to act.

But he doesn't do it all now because the only way for people to have that everything new world is by hearing the message about his death and resurrection and trusting that that is the only thing that can bring forgiveness and put things right between people and God.

But brothers and sisters, do you think this person will fail to sort everything out in the end? Do you think that possible? It's so easy for him to do this.

[42 : 33] He speaks and it happens. just like that. Do you think he lacks capacity? Do you think he lacks compassion?

Of course he doesn't. That future is secure and if it means waiting in difficult times, well that'll be worth waiting for, don't you think?

let's pray together. Amen. Just a moment in the quiet to respond ourselves to what we've heard from God's word this evening.

to remember that this Lord Jesus is the one who reigns over everything right now. Let's respond to him in whatever way is appropriate for us.

Amen. Gracious God, we thank you so much for the scriptures which speak about your son.

[44 : 13] And we thank you for these magnificent accounts that bear all over them the stamps of eyewitnesses and of reality. we thank you for the person who is revealed to us in these words, your excellent son.

And we pray that when life in this world is particularly difficult, when painful things happen to us, to the nation, to the world, in those moments when we so readily doubt your power or your goodness, we pray that you would help us to remember these stories and what they teach us about your son.

We pray that you'd help us tomorrow, today, next week, to be confident that he is supremely competent and supremely compassionate.

And we pray that whatever difficulties come to us in life, you would help us to continue to trust him. Trust that the methods that he's given to us are good.

Trust that his compassion is real. And trust that the future he has planned is absolutely secure. hear us, we pray, in his name.

[45 : 49] Amen.