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Gideon, Mighty Man of Valor, Part 3

Judges 6:12-35

Prayer: *...that you would guide us as we look into your book and I pray that you would be real to each and every one of us and that this would be of permanent value. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we've been following the life of Gideon, and as we are joining him, Gideon has been met by God at a time when Israel has been unfaithful literally for years, and Israel is desperate. God has turned them over to the Midianites who have made their lives absolutely miserable. And so we meet Gideon where he is hiding out and he's threshing wheat in a winepress knowing that should he be discovered, the Midianites are going to just swoop down and steal what little he has gained. So as Gideon is hiding away threshing this wheat, the angel of the Lord sits down opposite him and says: *"The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor."* And we've learned that this angel was no ordinary angel, it was what we call a theophany, an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ in which he took on the appearance of an angel. And what follows next is a

very long complaint by Gideon that he and Israel, they've been abandoned by God when in fact Gideon is speaking to the very God he's accusing of abandonment. And the angel of the Lord challenges Gideon, and he challenges him to take on the Midianites, saying: *"Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do I not send you?"* Gideon initially resists, telling the angel he's too small, he's too weak, he's too inconsequential to be any kind of match for the Midianites and then he asked the angel for a sign to prove that he is who he claims to be. Gideon brings this angel an offering, and he puts it on a rock and the angel touches it with his staff and fire leaps out of the rock and consumes the offering and then the angel just disappears leaving the text to say in *Judges 6:22: Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD. And Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face." But the LORD said to him, "Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die."*

Well, we spoke last time about Gideon's confrontation with the holiness of God and in spite of how unfaithful Israel had been, at least Gideon understood that God was holy, and he understood that he was not and to come close to God would be fatal if God wouldn't intervene. And we spoke last time about how critical it was to understand God's holiness if we are to understand some of the depth that he went to to ransom and rescue his sheep.

We asked the question, how did a God who was so holy as to cause instant death to those who came close like he almost did with Gideon, how was this God able to assume flesh in the form of the Lord Jesus Christ who lived out for the most part an extraordinarily ordinary life among his fellow humans? I mean the very same Christ who appeared to Gideon as a pre-incarnate angel was Jesus the Christ, a squalling baby born to a virgin in a barn in Bethlehem. God went from this fatally terrifying presence to the helplessness of a baby boy born to peasant parents some 2,000 years ago because he was on a mission. Mankind had fallen in the Garden of Eden disobeying God, obeying the voice of the serpent instead, trading in his perfection for the sin that had become part of the character of every one of Adam and Eve's offspring, including all of us here. But God was never taken by surprise by Adam's fall. God would come down to earth to ransom his people, and to do that he chose one man to create a nation, a nation that would one day give birth to a savior. Well, the man's name was Abraham and the nation that he created was Israel and it was Israel that would produce the Savior of mankind, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the story of Gideon is the story of the nation of Israel, and we've been following Israel from Abraham to Jesus and we've noted that Abraham's history and Israel's history was filled with missteps, it was filled with wars, it was filled with unfaithfulness, but God always had his hand on Israel and he was

always guiding and protecting them as he has been even to this day. Gideon lived some eleven centuries before Jesus was even born but he's a person of interest to us because the angel of the Lord, that's Christ himself, he intervenes in Gideon's life to protect and enable Israel to survive long enough to produce the Christ, that is God made flesh. The angel of God is not only protecting Israel through Gideon but he's also using this circumstance to teach us mightily.

And so we pick up Gideon's story at *Judges 6:24*. It says: *Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it, the LORD is Peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites. That night the LORD said to him, "Take your father's bull, and the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of the stronghold here, with stones laid in due order. Then take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah that you shall cut down."* So Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the LORD had told him. But because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night.

So just to set the stage here, Israel had adopted this pluralistic

approach to religion just like we here in the United States have. It's taken forty years but their commitment to the one true God is now standing shoulder to shoulder with a commitment to false gods like Baal and Asherah. So God tells Gideon that he has a task for him, and he listens and he eventually obeys. And so Gideon along with a crew of ten others, he launches a unilateral attack on these false gods by wrecking Baal's altar and cutting down Asherah's pole, and he does it by taking one of his father's bulls and literally bulldozing the altar. And he takes his father's other bull and he slaughters it as an offering to the real God using as fuel for the offering the wood that he has just torn down. And he does all of this under the cover of darkness. It's not exactly the way to endear yourself to your neighbors. Verse 28 says: *When the men of the town rose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the Asherah beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar that had been built. And they said to one another, "Who has done this thing?" And after they had searched and inquired, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing." Then the men of the town said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, for he has broken down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah beside it."*

What I want you to know is that Gideon's conflict which took place 3,000 years ago is still taking place right here today. You see,

Gideon figuratively and literally bulldozed his way into Israel's indecision about which god it was going to worship. And this is all just to set the stage for how terrifically dysfunctional Israel was at the time. I mean you got to remember, Israel is still under the heel of the Midianites who gather every single year to raid and strip them of everything. And it was that pressure that caused Israel to go after Baal in the first place looking for an alternative god that would help them in spite of their disobedience and idol worship. And so as we look at Israel, we see that they've gone from wholesale worship of the one true God to demanding the death penalty for someone who smashed the altars to their false gods. And it's not like Israel has no understanding of God's exclusive claims on their worship, I mean, they had been cast into the hands of the Midianites because they had slowly but surely accepted pagan worship as a normal part of their existence. Tolerance had become Israel's trademark as they now accepted worship of not only Jehovah but of Baal and Asherah as well. And it's a sad state of affairs. But out of this sad state of affair comes one person who seems to have come to his senses, and it's not Gideon, at least not yet. I mean if you're looking for a bright spot in this story, it would be Gideon's father Joash who is the owner of the altar of Baal. And I laud Joash for three reasons. First Joash at least instructed Gideon well. If you remember when Gideon first sits down with the angel, his complaint centers on his

knowledge of all the wonderful things that God had done for the people of Israel in the past. In verse 13 it says: *And Gideon said to him, "Please, my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, "Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?" But now the LORD has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian."* So clearly Joash had at least instructed Gideon and he knows and he understands who he is and who Israel is and what God has done in the past to rescue and protect Israel. Gideon's bewildered. But his bewilderment stems from the fact that he feels that God has abandoned them in spite of all the great and the wonderful deeds he has done in the past.

Secondly, when crunch time comes, well Joash stands up for his God and for Gideon. Verse 31 says: *But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning."* Joash also leaps to the defense of his son in spite of the fact that Gideon caused considerable property damage, that he's smashed the altars of Baal and Asherah, and he's also committed sacrilege against these false gods. Joash immediately makes the issue one of a contest between which god is the real God and which one is false. I mean the townspeople are calling for the death of Gideon for attacking their God and Joash flips the script. He calls for the

death of anyone who is willing to contend for Baal. And the particular defense that Joash uses indicates that he has no respect for these false gods. I mean the townspeople are all gathered demanding Gideon's execution. Joash instead demands that all false worshipers be executed. So Joash is demonstrating that his actual loyalty is with God and with Gideon.

And thirdly, Joash defends his God on the basis of truth itself. Verse 31 says: *But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for Baal? Or will you save him? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been broken down."* See Joash reasons from the standpoint of truth itself. What he's saying is, look, if Baal is a real god, he should certainly be able to fend for himself from someone as puny as Gideon. I mean remember, you got to remember, Israel has had many, many tests of the truth of God's claims. It was the Pharaoh in Egypt who directly challenged God's power and it was ten plagues later where Pharaoh and Egypt were utterly destroyed. Elijah directly challenged the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. I mean he did vaguely the same thing, he set up two altars and he challenged the real god to burn up the sacrifice by saying in *1 Kings 18:21*: *"How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."* And the

people did not answer him a word. Joash is essentially saying the same thing. He's no stranger to showdowns. And he makes an obvious statement about the power of false gods when he says of Baal: *"If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been broken down."* Now you may see this as ancient history, but I contend this is as contemporary as our culture is today. You see there's a great parallel between Israel at that time and us in our time. Gideon left no doubt what God's position on pluralistic worship was, it was to be torn down and it was to be burned up. And the people reacted to Gideon's assertion that God alone should be worshiped by demanding that Gideon pay for his intolerance with his life. Well, we too live in a time where the only real crime in our culture is the crime of intolerance.

I recently had a conversation with a woman, it involved a conflict involving three sisters: There was a strong believer, a new believer, and a non-believer. And my friend was the strong believer and she was ministering to her sister who was a relatively new believer. And this new believer was upset over a conflict that she had had with her unbelieving sister. She was sharing with her unbelieving sister a *You Tube* clip that spoke about how God worked in the cosmos. This video suggested that there were radio signals that stars emitted that actually were part of the cosmos singing to God and that the radio signals were really a form of worship toward

God. And because her non believing sister had an interest in astronomy, she thought, well, maybe it would be an interesting video to share with her. She was mistaken. She found that her video was received much like I'm sure Gideon's bulldozing was received. The non believing sister was furious at her assertion that God even existed let alone the fact that he was receiving worship from the stars. Her response was: "How dare you shove this Christian nonsense down my throat." Well the new believer was mortified. And so she began apologizing profusely and in the course of her apology she was saying, "Christianity works for me and I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but whatever makes your boat float." Well she was sharing that message with my friend. And thankfully my friend is a strong believer in Christ and she pointed out to her newly believing sister some things that truly need to be said and understood particularly in a culture like ours that so closely mimics the culture that Gideon was in, and it has to do with the binary nature of truth. You see the phrase "whatever makes your boat float" may work for things that you are fond of, things like Chinese food or Italian or whether or not you like to relax by watching sports or going hunting or whether or not you're an Eagles fan or a Patriots fan, but it doesn't work at all when it comes to absolute truth. And that's where we are today. I mean, one sister's truth is that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the universe and he's worthy of worship. Another sister's truth is

that she evolved from nothing by virtue of chance over great periods of time and that she answers to no one and nothing. And now from the most basic philosophical position there is, you can't say "whatever makes your boat float." I mean you can only have three responses to these two truth claims. One is that one is right, one is wrong, or maybe both of them are wrong. But one thing is for certain. If one is true, the other cannot be true. I mean Jesus cannot be the Lord of the universe and a nonexistent fairy tale at the same time. I mean it's got to be one or the other. That third possibility that both are wrong is there but there is no possibility whatsoever that both are right, because to believe one is to disbelieve the other. And that's the problem with this truth, it is binary. Binary means you only have two choices: It's yes or no, right or wrong, true or untrue. It's strange that in this digital area that has been built on the most binary premise there is, you know, a switch is either on or it's off, electricity is either there or it's not, in the face of that most binary understanding that we all live with today, we have this distinctly non binary attitude towards the truth. We reject the idea of "either or" in favor of "both and." And when it comes to discerning truth, we are no different than Gideon's ancient Israel choosing between God, Yaweh, Baal, Asherah, and the bottom line is truth is whatever you feel it is according to the culture. I mean if you feel that Jesus is Lord, then for you Jesus is Lord. If you

feel like Jesus is a fairy tale, if that is your truth, well then Jesus is indeed a fairy tale. Whatever makes your boat float.

The truth of the gospel doesn't really care about how we feel about it, I mean in the same way that the true state of electricity or gravity doesn't really care if you believe in it to be actually real or not. I doubt anyone would be tight roping on the edge of a twenty-story building because they rejected the notion of gravity and they didn't feel that it was real. I mean the reason why we don't do that is because the consequences of that approach to truth are very apparent and very deadly, but so are the consequences of abandoning the truth of the gospel. Jesus emptied himself of his divine authority and he took on all the limitations of humanity in order to live a perfect life and then offer that perfect life as a sacrifice on the cross. That is the truth. God has stated it as such. How we feel about it has absolutely nothing to do with whether or not it is true. I mean we stand today before a holy God not because we feel like we're worthy, because we're not. We can stand before God because certain factual things actually took place. God actually became a human being and he actually lived a flawless life and he actually went to the cross in order to offer up that life as a substitute for ours and the sacrifice was actually accepted so that he was actually capable of defeating death itself. Those are four factual occurrences. Christ's birth

Christ's life, Christ's death on the cross, and Christ's resurrection and that feeling has nothing to do with whether or not they're true. I mean if any one of these four actual facts didn't happen, well then Christianity's a joke and people who believe it are pitiful. And those are not my words, those are Paul's. In *1 Corinthians 15* he said: *If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

So the question is why is it that we are so afraid to speak the truth of this gospel? The fear is certainly something -- not something that's new, I mean, no doubt Israel's belief in Baal and Asherah came as a result of its people being unwilling or unprepared to refute what amounted to a false gospel. And like all false gospels, I'm sure it grew incrementally, a little tiny bit at a time in little tiny unnoticeable steps until it actually reached the stage where it demanded equal time and equal worship alongside the one true God. And by that time everyone including Gideon, well they were all sufficiently cowed into silence in spite of the fact that his nation's unbelief cost him everything, I mean, it made his nation a slave to the Midianites. You see, there's something about truth and it's this: Unless you cherish it and cling to it and defend it, you will soon find yourself hiding it, excusing it, and

in the end running from it. I mean as brave as Gideon was, I mean he tore down the altars of those false gods, as brave as he was, understand, he didn't budge until God himself came down and said go for it.

Again this is *Judges 6:25*, it says: *That night the LORD said to him, "Take your father's bull, and the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of the stronghold here, with stones laid in due order. Then take the second bull and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah that you shall cut down."* So Gideon took ten men of his servants and did as the LORD had told him. But because he was too afraid of his family and the men of the town to do it by day, he did it by night. Gideon was afraid and it is fear that makes us willing to embrace a lie. If you just back up a little bit, prior to this meeting that Gideon had with God himself, we find Gideon who's content to blame his dire circumstances not on his nation's abandonment of the one true God but of God's abandonment of them. That was a boldface lie, and that's how insidious the power of a lie is. I think one of the most insidious lies of our day and age is the phrase "Whatever makes your boat float." I mean that's the essence of Gideon think. And when we find that Gideon certainly still believed, as did his father, in

the one true God, it's just that over time he made room at the table for other gods.

You know when we were in India, we shared the gospel with a number of Hindus and we spoke of Jesus Christ and who he was and what he had done and we found that most folks there were very, very willing to accept Jesus. And why not? They had 18,000 gods; why not add another one? So they were very content to just say, "Sure, sure, we'll believe in Jesus." And when things started to get really dicey is when we started to say, "No, no, it's Christ alone and all these other gods are not true." I remember in particular one girl that we were speaking to on a train and the response that we got from her was, she said, "If I'm gracious and open and willing to accept your God, why are you not at least gracious enough to understand my understanding of my god?" Bottom line, it all comes down to it's not a question of feelings or anything like that, it's a question of what is true. I mean more importantly for each of us as individuals, it comes down to how we approach this truth. Truth be told and in this case the pun is intended, most of the Christians that I know subscribe to the "whatsoever floats your boat" version of truth. It's just too confrontational, it's just too embarrassing, too frightening to insist that truth matters more than hurt feelings or embarrassed silence. Fact is it matters a whole lot more.

I recently heard philosopher Jordan Peterson who I don't even think is a Christian, he's a person who has a huge following on *You Tube* as someone who speaks the truth and he doesn't really care what the consequences are. He's a Canadian university professor, he's very calm, very gracious. I've watched a whole bunch of his *You Tubes*. And I find it amazing that he's been vilified and demonized by folks who are appalled that he won't play the "whatever floats your boat" game and he won't be silenced. And I know the other day he was on the *Tucker Carlson Show* and he was making the case for speaking the truth this way. Carlson asked Peterson, he said, "If you could pass on one piece of life advice, what would it be?" And I was really struck by what he said. This is what he said, he said: "Stop saying things that make you weak. If you pay attention to what you say you will know that sometimes you feel like you're standing on a rock. You are in a solid place because you are truly speaking from your heart. And at other times you are saying things just to look good, to buttress your particular status at the time. And that makes you feel weak. You sell yourself out. And if you pay attention to what you say, you can tell when you're making yourself stronger and you can tell when you're making yourself weaker. And unless you want to be weaker, I would say it's best to say those things that make you strong. And you can learn to do that and it's really useful." Now understand what Peterson is saying. He's not giving license to anyone to beat

somebody over the head with the truth. Actually what he is doing is he's taking away the license to run from the truth at the expense of losing some of your social status. I mean I heard what he said and I wondered how many words do we say in any given day that are intended instead of speaking the truth, are intended to buttress my particular status at the time?

I heard Peterson's words and I almost instantly recalled the statement that was made about the ultimate truth teller Jesus Christ, and it was a statement made by his enemies. You know sometimes the most honest assessments come from us who are -- from people who are not in our camp. And this is said of him in *Mark 13*, *Mark 12:13*, spoken of Jesus. It says: *And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. It is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?"* Jesus was so different in the way he approached truth. He didn't care about anyone's opinion. He wasn't swayed by appearances. He just truly spoke the truth. You know we hear all the time about snowflakes and people who now consider opinions they disagree with to be hate speech, speech that you're not even allowed to utter and we've seen what's happened on college campuses

where people come supposedly to the one place where ideas are supposed to be exchanged and they come up with an idea that's not in line with the prevailing culture and there's literally hell to pay. Can I tell you something about speaking the truth of the gospel? There always was, there always is, and there always will be hell to pay. That's just the way it is.

You know, a few years back we had at the Tri-States' Pregnancy Center, we had a banquet and Gianna Jessen spoke at that banquet. She's an abortion survivor, she's a pro-life advocate but most important she's a very outspoken Christian. And she said, she made a statement that is amazing to me. I want you to think about what she said. She said, "To be a follower of Christ you need to be willing to be hated." She didn't say you need to be hated, she said you need to be willing to be hated. My question for us this morning is do you believe that? Do you agree with that sentiment? Listen to what Randy Alcorn has to say. He says this: "If we seek our culture's approval, we'll either never get it or get it only at the expense of failing to represent Christ. We are promised, that if we 'live godly lives in Christ Jesus' we 'will suffer persecution.' If we're not suffering persecution, at some level, then what does that suggest? We should certainly be nice, and it's sad when Christians aren't. But it's also sad when we imagine 'niceness' has greater impact than it really does. Niceness is not

the gospel. Some modern concepts of evangelism are a little more than being nice to your neighbor and loaning him your hedge clipper and hoping that somehow he will come to Christ without you actually having to say the words of the gospel which would run the risk of him thinking you're weird. Our good example is important, but it's not sufficient. There are actual truths that must be grappled with in surrendering to Jesus. And these truths are expressed in words." And let me just give you the words that he referred to. These are Paul's words in *1 Corinthians 15*, he says: *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you -- unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.* Now any gospel that doesn't contain those elements is not the good news. I mean it may be nice news but nice news never saves anyone.

Alcorn goes on to say: "Among some believers the new definition of a good Christian is holding your beliefs privately, not challenging those who publicly share beliefs that dishonor Christ, and avoiding controversy at all costs lest we be perceived as 'those kind of Christians' who hate gays, oppose abortion, favor inquisitions and

live to burn witches. We so much want the world to like us that we end up distancing ourselves from the historic Christian faith, from biblical doctrine (including hell), and from churches (because they're all hypocrites except us). We end up making ourselves indistinguishable from the world, and therefore have nothing to offer the world."

I can sum up every single thing that Randy Alcorn is trying to say in the words of Jordan Peterson. What he says is stop saying things that make you weak. Stop saying things that are meant to buttress your particular status at the moment and instead consider speaking the truth in love to people you might not have ever considered doing that before.

Israel got into the mess they were in because slowly but surely they allowed the camel's nose of a false gospel to push its way into their tent. And before they knew it, the entire camel was in the tent actively trying to push out the real God for the worship of Baal and Asherah. And it got so bad that God himself had to come down to move Gideon to take action against these false gods. That's exactly how the enemy operates in our lives today, particularly in our culture. We have become so accustomed to multicultural intolerance and we have welcomed it into our tent so that now to speak up for the gospel is now an affront to most

people's sensibilities. I mean there's another lesson to be learned in the reaction that Gideon got. You see when you don't speak up for the gospel, people still don't thank you, they don't appreciate your tolerance, they don't appreciate your silence. Instead when you do speak up, they respond with outrage, "How dare you send me that *You Tube* video!" In Gideon's case they wanted to take his life. The reason why people get so upset is because they make assumptions based on our weakness. That makes it even harder for them to hear us the next time. If I have a relationship with somebody, one of the first things I want them to know is I'm a sinner saved by grace. I'll admit for me it's easy, I mean, I'm a pastor, that's what I do. But for 30 years I was a cabinetmaker and during those times it didn't matter to me if you were a client or somebody just wandering in looking for some advice. First thing I wanted you to know was that I was a Christian, because I knew that if we were going to have any type of relationship whatsoever, that that was the knowledge that was going to be tested with an eye toward keeping it silent, keeping it under wraps so as not to offend. And over the years I was told by a number of people that I developed a reputation of being just a little off, a little weird, you know, kind of a holy roller cabinetmaker kind of thing. Let me tell you, nothing thrilled me more than to hear that because there's nothing -- if there's anything that I would rather have the reputation to have is as a lover of Jesus Christ because there's no

one I want to impress more than him. It was Jesus who said in *Matthew 10*: "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven."

Gideon acknowledged the one true God and he knew exactly what kind of response he was going to get. That's why he did it at night. And next time we'll see that the response to Gideon's attack on pluralism was so intense that it only got interrupted by a stunning new piece of information that we see in *Judges 6:32*, it says: *Therefore on that day Gideon was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, "Let Baal contend against him," because he broke down his altar. Now all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East came together, and they crossed the Jordan and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel.* Guess who was back. And guess who was now assembling in droves just waiting for the signal to once again attack Israel and strip them bare. We'll see next time that God was preparing Gideon for even greater things in this attack on the pluralism of his own nation and hopefully we'll see that as God was with Gideon, so too he wants to be with us as we stand against the pluralism of our day and declare once and for all that we are going to stop saying things that make us weak. Let's pray.

Father, I just again, I thank you for your word, I thank you for the example that we have, I thank you for Gideon, the mighty man of

valor, who in so many ways represents all of us with his fears, with his backtracking, with his trying to make up for lost time, with all of the events that took place in his life, we see them taking place in our lives today. Father, I pray that you would give us the ability to speak the truth in a climate where that is now considered to be an affront and an insult. I pray that you would give us the courage and the ability to trust in you to give us the words that we need to speak as we speak them and that you would give us the wisdom we need to accompany those words. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.