

## **Preach the Word**

2 Timothy 4:1-8

28/09/2025

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### TRANSCRIPT:

Well, thank you, Joshua. Thank you, Tom. Thank you to the church at Camden Valley for inviting me. This is a great honor. We've not only been praying for this church and praying for the start and the growth of the church, but now we're so encouraged that we can be here the day that you appoint another elder.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to 1 Timothy 4, where we'll be looking at those eight verses. And whilst you're doing that, just greetings also from Smithfield Baptist Church. Many of you know them, and they know many of you. And it's been wonderful having fellowship with all of you here. Some of our people drive right past here to come to our church, and we've already got it in our mind that we'll probably lose them, but we're just thankful you filled up this room, which will probably keep them with us for a little longer.

As we should be in 1 Timothy 4, I think you probably might know in your own studies that these are the final words from Paul in this letter. I suspect they're probably Paul's final words to his young friend, his young coworker, Timothy, and he knows he's going to die. Paul is aware of his mortality quite acutely, and before he departs, he gives Timothy a charge. It's a charge to do the duty to which he is called. It's a very solemn charge. It's not something he takes lightly. He expects Timothy to resolve, to make a resolution, and to commit himself to carry out his duties before God and before his Lord, Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 1: "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom." And so, I think it's right for us to assume that Timothy vowed before God and before his Lord Jesus Christ that he would devote his life to serving Jesus Christ in His church. I put it to you; it would be in his mind he'd be thinking about serving in a local church. I think he was thinking of Ephesus because that's where he was. Paul knew that he and Timothy must give an account one day for their work, and this was something serious. And they were expecting that they would have to front up to Jesus,

and Jesus will judge the living and the dead, we're told, at His appearing and His kingdom.

With this in mind, I'm required now to give a charge to Tom and a charge, in some respects, to the church as well. Permit me to include you all every now and then as I give this charge. Let us pray, and then we'll come to the text.

Heavenly Father, as we come to solemn words, as we come to words of vowing, of commitment, Lord, we once again come with the fear of God in our hearts. We come very much aware that it is better for men to be silent than to speak in the house of God. Lord, to let our words be few and let our words be meaningful. And so, we pray that even as I preach, that my words will be simple, clear, few, and meaningful, and they will hit the mark, Lord, that they will be words of commitment that we will all make to You. Have mercy on us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

So, the first point I'd like to bring, firstly to you, Tom, and then to you as a church as well, is that we must, you must, prioritize preaching. We find this very clear and very heavily emphasized in the very first two verses that we read. Verses 1 and 2: "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom." And then you find these words: "Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season." And the obvious question is, what is preaching?

The Greek word really is like that word herald. The impression is that of someone official that has been sent by a high authority to gather, if you like, the people of a town and to make a public announcement. The old picture of the town crier in England, who would come into a village and basically shout out or herald or preach the king's edict in the town square, should be the picture that comes to mind.

So, Paul charges Timothy to preach, not just anything he comes up with; he says to preach the word. It's the word of His Lord and King, Jesus. He must carefully pay attention to the scripture. The Bible text must dominate His message. Timothy is not to be distracted. He's not to be distracted with moral stories like Aesop's fables. He's not to be sidetracked with myths of yesteryear. He's not to even get caught up with fashionable and very credible literary works. Timothy, you are called to focus on the word.

Preaching is to be, if you like, not only spoken out to the public gathering; it has to understand that the public gathering generally has the common man in attendance. And so, it's not an academic lecture. It's not, as one commentator put it, it's not high up there for spiritual giraffes. It's like

grass or pasture for God's sheep. Scripture is not a standup comic, although every now and then, you can't help yourself. You do feel there's something funny in it. Even the gospels and the letters have sarcasm and jokes in it. But one commentator says he's not to be a commentator, for instance, on politics or someone who is a reporter on worldly trends. He's not to speculate on philosophies.

Timothy, Tom, preach the word is what we're told, and preach it simply. If you focus on the word, you will never run out of messages. You will never run out of topics. You will never run out of material to say, and you will hope at halfway through this message that I do run out. But don't be stressed. If you are someone who is studying the Bible and preaching the Bible, you will have a topic for Sunday. You will not stress out all week to suddenly hope that something magically falls in your lap on Saturday. You will also get off all your hobby horses. You will find all your biases, your imbalances, those temptations to pick on someone who's picked on you earlier, will all be taken away by preaching the word.

Confessions and fads will not come into your mind and take grip of you. The word should. Preaching is different to teaching, isn't it? Teaching explains the Bible, and you should have teaching in preaching. Teaching can systemize truth to cause you to focus on a topic, and you could focus on God. You can focus on man. You can even focus on another topic of practical activity. You can even focus on text in teaching. But preaching is more.

Eliot says preaching is personal, personal, personal. You are to get personal. You are to apply what you teach. There's a certain hostility in preaching. It is not just basically words explained. There is a sense of attack. God is bringing His word to the conscience of sinners. In preaching, we're not only just attacking in a vicious or aggressive way; we're pleading. Preaching includes pleading to the hearer to turn from their sin and to turn to Christ. Preaching authoritatively commands hearers into action. Often there is just basic reasoning. Sit down and come and reason with the Scriptures. Listen to the truth of the Bible, and there is with it usually comes this warm invitation from God to come to Him.

Yes, it is theology, preaching. But as Martin Lloyd-Jones says, theology that sets a man on fire. By the preached word, churches come into existence. It is by the preached word that churches get form and substance. It's by the preached word that churches continue and grow.

Folks, I can put it to you that it is by the preached word that Camden Valley Baptist Church exists. You might think you woke up this morning or some morning and thought I'd come and join this church and be there. And there's a sense in which it's true. You do. But it is when the word is

preached. And when God works through His Holy Spirit, then you see the hearts of believers inflamed to want to gather together, to want to proclaim His name, and to worship and praise Him.

Read verse 2 with me again: "Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." Paul is urging Timothy, obviously, to take up every single opportunity you get to preach. Actually, going further, I suspect he's saying something like this: He's saying proactively seek out opportunities to preach. If there is a school, go and approach them and ask them if you can start preaching the word in SRE. If there is a nursing home, go out there and basically see how the word can get into that. If it even just means a letterbox drop that actually puts one Bible verse into people's hearing, preach the word in season and out of season, when they want it and when they don't, when it's convenient for you and when it's not. He's saying be always on duty. Be prepared for a last-minute call-up. When people are generally lax in your society, convince or challenge them. The word convince can also mean something like tell them they're wrong. Show them that they are at fault. Expose the errors of our society.

And so today, there is a common thought that you can preach the Bible and make sure you don't enter into the social or cultural wars of society. I think you just cannot avoid it. A pulpit that never says abortion is sin basically says even murder is not sin. Well, then clearly nothing else is. A pulpit that avoids gender, that avoids talking about debt that never gets paid back, cheating on taxes, that doesn't expose God's like even the footy on the weekend. It's become a God to us. We basically entertain ourselves to death.

You might have to rebuke people at times from the pulpit, Paul says to Timothy. He says you might have to admonish them. Admonish them and tell them they are not to fear men. They're not to fear the world. Rebuke. Rebuke men and women who think that Christianity is something that is a hobby. It's just a laid-back activity that we have just like everything we Aussies do. But then not only should you convince and rebuke, you should also get alongside people. Get alongside them and exhort them with comforting words and comfort them and encourage them to do that which God has laid upon their heart, and do it with patience and longsuffering. Did you pick that up? Convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering, and then he puts that word, and teaching. You're always reasoning with people from the word. You're always basically showing them from the Bible. You're gently encouraging them from the Bible. You're gently rebuking them from the Scriptures. You're saying, "I've got no option. I have to tell you this. This is what the Bible says."

Our jobs are not to make people feel good about themselves. Our jobs are not to build up self-esteem. Tom, this is the means that God will use. This is the means that God will use to build up His Church and build you up. In season and out of season, when the Word is preached, folks, this is what God will use through His Spirit to do a work even in our day.

Lloyd-Jones once again, he says in every age, the most urgent needed thing in a church is preaching. John Bunyan, 1628, he was basically uneducated. He was converted in 1653. His father was illiterate. He could not read. He says this of his conversion: "Conversion is not a smooth, easygoing process. It is a wounding work. It breaks hearts, but without wounding, there is no saving." Now, I don't know if you've read *Pilgrim's Progress*. There's a task for everyone who hasn't read *Pilgrim's Progress* to buy it. It's the second most-read book in the world to the Bible. And it's worth reading because that is his conversion account. He does it by way of allegory. He's a genius.

In 1653, he joined the Bedford Baptist Church. In 1656, he was called to be their pastor. Four years after being called to be a pastor and preaching in what was really something like a home church, he ended up being arrested and put into prison for 12 years. He was often offered a release but one proviso: do not preach. His response went like this: "Sir, you let me go today, and I will be preaching tomorrow." At the same time, his daughter was 10 years old and blind. I don't know if it comes to mind right now, but I can think of at least 10 excuses for why I would leave and not take up preaching, and they would sound very godly to you, I promise.

But the jailers were so impressed with Bunyan that at nights when no one was watching, they would let him out, and he would rush out, and he would go out, and he would preach. Now the jailers knew they would lose their jobs and even more, but so impressed with him were they in jail. The one biographer says this: "Many of the Baptist congregations in Bedfordshire owe their origins to the midnight preaching of John Bunyan." He'd go out and preach at 11 o'clock or 12 o'clock; this is at night, and hundreds would come to hear him in barns.

And now you've got to think about this: John Bunyan only had a Bible and Fox's Book of Martyrs in his room. How did he prepare? He had no other books; he didn't have commentaries, and I just don't know how he survived without ChatGPT. How did he preach? He says this: "I have experienced union with Christ, the anointing of the Spirit, the experience of the temptations of Satan." He said these three things more fit a man for the mighty work of preaching the gospel than all the university learning, all the degrees that can be had. You see what his mindset was: I need to preach to myself first. I need to deal with the errors in my life first. I need

to see the Word of God address me first, and then I can take those dealings into the pulpit.

Tom, you must prioritize preaching, but then can I speak to you as a congregation? You need to prioritize preaching. You need to sit under the Word of God regularly. You can have a million excuses for not turning up to church. Can I put it to you, they're all rubbish. Find a way to prioritize being under the Word of God. A congregation that has an inconsistent hunger for the Word of God preached deserves a pastor who cannot preach. A congregation who comes unprepared for preaching, who slept at two in the morning or stayed up and partied all night and come totally exhausted and distracted, well, they deserve a preacher who has little desire for preaching. Folks, prioritize preaching.

The second point we pick up from our text is you must be willing to work and serve even in difficulty. The obvious question is, why preach? Why should Timothy preach his heart and his life out? Why should Tom preach in season and out of season? Why tell people they're wrong? It's a hazardous duty. You've got to ask the question, what's in it for me, don't you? How would you answer that question if Tom asked you, why should I preach in season and out of season?

Perhaps we would expect Paul to say something like this: "You know, Tom, the fields are white, and they're white with harvest. And don't worry, go out there and preach because if you preach, you will definitely get a good response. Hundreds will follow. Your church will soon be full. Offerings will overflow. Music will sound a little bit like an orchestra. You will be famous, you will be popular, you'll be successful, and if you just take a very small percentage of the offerings, you'll be rich." Paul says none of this. I don't think he's been to a motivation or an advertising class.

Look at verses 3 and 4: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables." Basically, he's saying things are going to get worse. He's saying urgently preach now before things get worse. He's already actually described the moral decline in society or the moral, if you like, failures in society in verse 1 of the chapter before, chapter 3. If you go back to chapter 3, look at verse 1 and see what he says about society there: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such

people turn away."

Now, I think these last days are the days between the ascension of the Lord Jesus and they end at His coming. In these days, this is what people will be like. And Simon Manchester, he puts it this way with a very graphic illustration. He says basically, in the world, there's going to be the tsunami of wickedness. And the tsunami of wickedness will swell up like a massive wave and it will basically head itself towards the church with a view to basically overwhelming and drowning out the church totally with wickedness.

In 2004, we knew of a tsunami. The waves were 30 meters high. That's about 50 or more feet. It not only overwhelmed one town in Indonesia, Aceh, but then 13 other countries as well were smashed. It killed over 200,000 people. Imagine if just one bloke could stand on the beach at Aceh and all he had to do was huff and puff repeatedly, and imagine if the waves could be just blown back and they would just recede, and he would save 200,000 people. What would you call that man? It would be tempting to call him Superman or something. We wouldn't call him Hot Air Man because I think my family have already got that name for someone in the family.

But here, Paul summons this Timothy, and he calls on Timothy to be that man. He expects a flood of wickedness to come from the world and eventually come into the church. And he says, "Timothy, you're perfectly placed. You are the man that God's called to blow hard and huff and puff until the tide of wickedness recedes." Notice what he says about Timothy in that same chapter, chapter 3, verse 10 of chapter 3: "But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, and afflictions." You see, he's already watched Timothy's way of life. This is what you as a church have already done with Tom. Look at verse 14 of the same chapter: "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Timothy has had a grounding in the Scriptures. He was converted and brought to the Lord through the Scriptures that make him wise for salvation.

And so then, in chapter 4, Paul logically concludes, and he commissions Timothy, and he says to him, "You are perfectly placed to preach the Word in season and out of season." You see, Paul believes that biblical expository preaching in the church is the only effective way to expel the wickedness out of the church. It will be pushed out like that single man pushes out a wave of tsunami of wickedness. You see, this wickedness in the church is really quite easy to spot, Paul says. It's not that hard. And the earliest sign

is when someone comes and complains about that unfashionable expository biblical preaching. When they come and whinge and they say, "Well, I listen to a lot of podcasts all through the week, and I noticed you didn't really cover some of the topics of the podcasts. I listen to some of the TV's, the preachers on TV, and they can walk around, and they don't have notes, and they have teeth that are perfectly white. I don't find you that attractive. I don't know whether you listen to a blog or whether you read a blog. I'm also hopeless. And I find whenever I do, they seem to tell me what I want to hear. They always tell me things I agree with. But I come to church, and I don't always get what I want to hear, and I certainly don't agree with you."

You see, these people would prefer to cancel someone who will expose their sin. They would prefer to avoid any kind of preaching that ruffles their feathers and brings to bear the Word of God on their conscience. They would rather hear a self-improvement technique. They would rather hear that God thinks they're so special and has a plan for them. They would prefer endless debates on the end times. We've got a guy who comes to our church every now and then, and he's heard every single debate on the end times. We have another who constantly wants to discuss with me baptism and theonomy and every possible debate they can find outside. They have little heart to hear of the glories of Christ. They have little desire to even hear of His wonderful incarnation, the glory of the Lord Jesus at the cross, and His majestic and powerful resurrection and ascension.

You see, you can tell these people with those itching ears. They might have itching ears, but they certainly have a bundle of opinions. In this context, Timothy is told in verse 5, "be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." See, elders are expected to expect problems. Yes, you are also to be watchful for those wonderful green shoots and encourage them and bring them along. But he says, "you've got to be watchful for all things, not just the green shoots. You must keep your head," is the mindset. "You mustn't be swayed easily by everybody who wants to pull you left and right for everything."

I remember we were preaching through Romans 1, and I didn't go verse by verse, but boy, I was tempted. And we went through small chunks, and one person came up to me and said, "Do you think we've had enough judgment? I'd like to change the topic." I think you have to realize that in preaching and watching for all things, you will be pushed around. You will have to endure and expect afflictions. You must confront wickedness. You must give yourself to the regular exposition of the Bible.

Another key antidote to the wickedness that might come into the church, clearly, is to do the work of an evangelist, evangelism. Paul instructs Timothy to do the work, not because he's changing his job or giving him a



new office. This is not a new office. He's emphasizing one of his responsibilities. He's saying, "You must get to know non-Christians. You must mix with non-Christians in your suburb, and you must bring the gospel to them." You must do this because you will bring the good news to sinners, and you're also modeling evangelism for the church. At the same time, believers in the church will see you doing the work that they must do. New believers or new unbelievers, when they come into the church, it's funny how they drown out the noise of those people with itching ears. The whole brigade wants to come and whinge and moan, but you know what? Bring in a few unbelievers and new Christians, and instantly they lose the attention. They don't get any attention, and these people with lots of opinions will move away.

And then the catchall: "Timothy, fulfill your ministry." Make full proof. Don't be half-hearted. Give yourself generously to the work of God. Visit the old. Visit the sick. These days, visit those with mental health issues. Visit those who will come and see you who will probably never get better. Those who are constantly sad and will never become happy people. The unpopular, the ones who ask the questions about the end times every week. Don't just gravitate to the cool bunch. Yes, you should do the weddings, but do the filing after the weddings as well. Yes, you should preach on Sunday, but do not despise SRE. Do not think doing letterboxes on the Friday beneath you or below your energies. Rather, spend all your energies, exhaust all your resources, leave no petrol in the tank. Do not neglect your task. Do not neglect your duties just because they are inconvenient. You are setting an example to the church, and the example is really simple: Christianity costs. Christianity comes to you free. It's all of grace, but once you come to Christ, He will possess all of you. He will conquer every part of you. Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself." Not deny a quarter of himself or deny a hobby that he has or deny one hour a week. He's not saying that. No, He's saying, "Take up his cross and follow Me."

Tom, devote your whole life to the great work of shepherding God's people, even if it is difficult. And lastly, on a positive note, you can look forward to a reward. Now, we've got to remind ourselves about context, don't we? We've got to understand how did this letter come about, who got it, what was it for, and you've got to remind yourself right at the beginning that this came from a man who was about to die. The apostle Paul says this in verse 6: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand." He's got no delusions about his future. He hasn't got a five-year plan. He's not saving up for a superannuation scheme. He says, "I am already being poured out." The pouring out action has already started. It is in progress. He knows that his whole life and service is behind him. There's not a lot in front of him. And his whole life was poured out like wine on a sacrifice. His whole life is really like a sweet aroma to the

Lord.

And I suspect this is why when you look at these verses in 2 Timothy, you don't get any sense of fear in Paul's words. He's just about to be executed, and there's nothing about how this is worrying him or how he is frightened. He has not a single expression of regret. He doesn't sit down and say, "Oh, I could have toned it down a little bit." He says, "No, no, I'm really happy. I've enslaved myself to Jesus Christ." He gave himself fully to the calling of being an apostle. Jesus Christ called him, and he gladly went. He gave his abilities, his talents, his time, and he did it all with a willing heart.

But then you've got to stop, don't you, and you've got to really think about the recipient of the letter, Timothy. He's someone Paul loved. And we could go as far as to say they were very close. I suspect Timothy became a Christian through his mother and grandmother. I don't know if Paul led him to the Lord, but maybe, I suspect it was his mum and grandmum. They taught him the scriptures, we're told. But what we do know is Timothy accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey. Now, he might have met him on the first journey; we don't know, we're not told. But we do know that Timothy was like an assistant to Paul in that second missionary journey.

And if you're Timothy and you're wondering what was it like, I don't think it was exciting with the beatings and the boats and the walking on roads and all that sort of stuff. No, what it was, was a Bible college degree and an internship all in one. And it was probably from someone you wouldn't get a better education from. Quite impressive. I suspect they got on. I think Paul trusted Timothy a lot. I think Timothy was possibly timid and he had something of a weak constitution physically, but I think Timothy was rated pretty highly by Paul. He was left by Paul to look after the church of Ephesus, and I think Paul liked the church of Ephesus as well. He spent three years there, which is more than what he spent in most other places. In his three years, Acts 20, for instance, gives us that account. And in verse 20, we're told that he preached publicly, and he went from house to house, and he taught from house to house. And what did he do? He taught the whole counsel of God. The Ephesian's church had a grounding like no other church. And Paul wanted this church, I suspect, in good hands. And so he calls his really good friend, I would go as far as to say his son, Timothy, his son in the faith, and he says, "Can you look after the people of God?"

I don't know if you can picture Paul in jail, but I suspect he was sitting in a corner, thanking God a lot for Timothy. He probably didn't know it was possibly a sin, but I think he was pretty proud of Timothy, too. He was sitting there saying, "I'm pretty excited. Things are going to be alright, even after I die. Look at this bloke. He does things better than me." I think he'd

be wishing there were more Timothys. I think he would be thinking if we had more Timothys, it would be good for the church.

I don't know if you noticed, sometimes you learn more about what is not said than what is said. He never ever says to Timothy, "Preserve yourself." He doesn't say to Timothy, "Sort out your work-life balance first, and then give the rest to Jesus." He doesn't say, "Ease up applying the Word because with it, if you don't ease up, you'll get persecution, and persecution is not fun. It's a little painful." Or maybe he should say, "I love you so much, give up the ministry. It's just too costly. Look at me, I'm going to die. I'm in prison. Just about the time when I should be planning a cruise." Instead, by example and by instruction, he says, "Endure suffering. Command Timothy to evangelize sinners. Say, 'Fulfill your ministry,' and of course, most importantly, 'Preach your heart out.'"

Ironside says this: "It is a poor Christianity that wants Christ to suffer and die for me, and yet refuses to identify with Him to avoid work, to avoid suffering, and to avoid persecution."

A month ago, Charlie Kirk was assassinated. Not months ago, this month, was it? The 10th of September. He's asked by a guy called Jack Selby a few weeks before that. He's asked this: "If everything completely goes away, how do you want to be remembered?" Charlie Kirk comes back and says, "What do you mean? Do you mean if I die?" And so Selby says, "Yes, if you want to be associated with one thing, if you want to be remembered by one thing, what would you want to be remembered by?" Kirk says, "I want to be remembered for courage, for my faith." He says, "The most important thing, the most important thing, is my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." September 7, just before September 10, when he was shot, it posted on X, "Jesus defeated death so I can live."

Now, Paul was not asked that question, "How do you want to be remembered?" I don't think Paul really cared about whether he was remembered or not. You'd need to ask him, like you'd have to ask Charlie Kirk, I think you'd need to ask Paul as well. But Paul, just without any invitation, basically gives Timothy what his final thoughts are. We find them in verse 7 onwards. He says, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not to me only, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

I think if I got this in a letter as I was about to start ministry, I'd be a little bit scared. But Paul knew it would not scare Timothy. Paul knew Timothy was aware of the suffering, and he considered it a privilege and an honor to suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ. He understood Ironside's words,

didn't he? He understood that it is a poor Christianity, it's not even Christianity, that wants Christ to suffer for me and Christ to die for me, and yet I refuse to identify with Him.

You see, Timothy also knew that there was a crown of righteousness laid up for them, for Paul and Timothy. I mean, I think the crown of righteousness is like this gold. It's clearly not something physical; it's a crown of righteousness. And it's not just for Timothy and Paul because we tend to think that crown is only for apostles and pastors and other people who are somehow in the ministry. But no, Paul says this: he says the crown of righteousness is laid up for all who love Christ's appearing.

You are called to work, you are called to serve, but the rewards are all of grace. They will be not because you're a great servant, they will not be because there's something special about you; there is something special about the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus says, "Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." That's the crown of righteousness. We can look forward to a crown.

Now, let me close off because I did say I don't want to leave the congregation out. I don't know what you're looking forward to this morning. Is it next week's NRL grand final? We tend to think, "Oh, that's funny." No, sometimes we're as shallow as that. Is it, are you looking forward to your next holiday? And we think, "Oh well, that's a bit petty." No, no, we really are that shallow. Perhaps you're thinking about the next paycheck or the next house. And you think, "Oh well, that's a little bit more substantial. I want to provide for my family." No, it's not really that substantial compared to the crown of righteousness.

I put it to you that if you're not looking forward to the appearing of Jesus Christ, if you're not longing to be with Him, you're either not a Christian, which I suspect is likely, or there's something seriously wrong with your Christianity, and you need to repent, and you need to turn from whatever you're longing for right now because whatever you're longing for is shallow. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank You again for Your Word. Thank You for Tom and for his service. Thank You for the many times we've actually seen these very things in his life. We pray that You will continue to cause them to grow, and we pray that You will bless this church. And Lord, we pray that the Word of God will be a prominent thing in this church for all its days ahead. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.