



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

## Hope for the Victim and Victimizer - (Genesis 38)

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**[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]**

Well hey everybody, it's been a decade since I've even been at a service here at Northview. Back when I used to work here, um ministries had cool names like; Rad, and Inextreme, and Sola, and Johnny Markin had hair, right ages ago. [Laughter] Vic Schellenberg still had no hair - that's consistent, that's nice. Um but it is so good to be back, it feels like something of a homecoming for me, and a really grateful to be back. Um I get to conclude the *Stranger Things in the Bible* series and here's one of the things I love about the Bible - it's so real, hey? Like the Bible is just so real, it's so honest. I was reading the news, the local news, well the Vancouver news, ah just the other day, and what - there's like ten articles there and two or three of them were shocking to me. I'm just reading the local news and I'm like, "Man that is messed up." Or I read something, I'm like - that's so sad, or that's tragic, or that's so obscure and weird, that's just reading the news and then you open your Bible sometimes and you're reading a story and you're like - that's so weird, that's so obscure, that's so sad, right? The Bible is so real, why? Because it's Scripture - it's the stories of fallen humanity. And so it applies to us, fallen humanity, and what the Scriptures show us is, it shows us how God interacts and intervenes in the midst of such chaos. And so we're going to look at one such story where a few times as we read it - we're going to be in Genesis 38 - a few times as we read it this morning we're going to be like; what...that's messed up. So go to Genesis 38, if you have a Bible, if you have an app - go there - if you start playing *Fortnite* or *Angry Birds* I'm going to smack you with mine, okay? That's not what this is about - no we're pacifists right? Okay, we won't do that.

As you go there, let me catch you up to Genesis 38 and Genesis 37 there is this group of brothers - the sons of a man named Jacob, and Jacob has um broken the cardinal rule of parenting, which is he's made it apparent to all his sons who his favourite is - you don't do that as a parent. My parents were secretive about it, they just let me know behind closed doors, my sisters didn't know. [Laughter] But what Jacob has done is he's made it clear to the whole family, Joseph, is his favourite, and one day the brothers are just so angry with him. They're just ready to kill him, and they're about to kill him and these traders come along on their way to Egypt and Judah has this idea; let's not kill him, let's sell him as a slave, he'll be as good as dead and we can get some cash, that's better. And so they do that, and then they take Joseph's technicolour dream coat and they spill some goat's blood on it and they bring it to their dad, Jacob, and say, "Look what we found. Who's is this?" And Jacob of course sees this coat that he had given his beloved son and he's in anguish, he believes that his son has been mauled by a wild animal and that he is dead, and he begins to mourn. That's where we pick it up in Genesis 38, and I don't know if it's because Judah, over some years, starts to feel really guilty about



what he's done, or I don't if he's just tired day, after day, after day, as time goes on seeing his dad mourning for that favourite son - but whatever the case is, Judah decides to move away from his family to the wrong land, and people didn't do that at that time. Families stuck together, but off goes Judah, out of town, to the wrong land and he finds a woman there who he marries - the wrong woman. And they have a family and as his sons begin to grow up he finds a wife for his oldest son Er, a young Canaanite woman named Tamar, that's where we pick it up in Genesis 38:7,

"But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord put him to death."

What it doesn't say is, Er did some wicked stuff, no it says Er was wicked, like through and through - his thoughts, his actions, his heart, his soul - all of these things were wicked, and so one day God just brings judgement upon him and puts him to death. We continue, because of the death of Judah's first born son, Er, he instructs his second son, Onan, to fulfill the custom of Levirate marriage, which it required a brother to marry his brother's childless widow and give her children. Now some of you married women are like, "Oh my goodness, like if I had to marry my brother-in-law, ugh." Right? And some of you of you are like, "Oh if I could marry my brother-in-law." Stop it! Okay. [Laughter] That's inappropriate, okay, but here that's what was needed - why? Well because it was actually a grace to the childless widow because there was no one more vulnerable at that time, than a childless widow - no one to protect her, no one to provide for her, and so there's a grace in this, as foreign a scenario it might seem like to us. We pick it up in Genesis 38:9,

"But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his."

And so it goes on to talk about a old-school form of birth control that he uses to ensure that Tamar will not be pregnant. And the rationale for it is this: see if Tamar had sons, it would be as though they were Er's, the sons of the first born and they'd have all those rights, all those privileges, the lion's share of the land and all of that kind of stuff. And Onan wanted no part of that, he wanted that for his kids. But it goes on to tell us in Genesis 38:10,

"And what he *did* was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and he put him to death also."

In God's eyes, Onan had done something so wicked that he brought swift judgement and death upon Onan. Pick it up in Genesis 38:11,

"Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, 'Remain a widow in your father's house, till Shelah my son [the third son] grows up.'"

That sounds all well and good, dress in widows garments, go back to your father, and mourn until the time when my third son is old enough to give you children. But, we get an insight here that he wasn't being sincere.

"For he feared that he would die, like his brothers. So Tamar went and remained in her father's house."



See Judah sent her back in widow's garments, falsely promising his son, Shelah, to her, when he was older - when in fact, he had no plans in doing that, and at that point what was going on, was Judah was thinking, "Okay wait - there's a common denominator here - it's Tamar." And so what he could have done was allow her to go home single, not betrothed, so she could marry again, but what he's actually doing is placing a life sentence of widowhood on her and placing her in a very vulnerable state. Let's fast-forward a little bit. Tamar, one day, sees Shelah all grown up and if she hadn't put the pieces together yet, she does now. Judah has no plans of giving her children through Shelah, so she takes matters into her own hands. Now this is written in the Scriptures much like a news report, it's just stating the facts, it's not saying this is a great thing, this a super awesome idea - it's not saying that, it's just telling us what happens next. Tamar takes off her widow's garments and puts on the garments that a prostitute would wear, and she goes by the roadside, by a gate, that she I guess knew Judah would walk by. Now Judah's wife had passed away and he briefly mourned her - which is so ironic because he sent his daughter-in-law home to mourn for years; he briefly mourns his wife, walking down the road one day and sees what looks like a prostitute at the side of the road and he proposition's her. And she says, "What will you give me?" And he says, "A young goat." Now I just kinda wish that like the *Stranger Things* theme music would start to rumble underneath us here when things like this happen. So he wants to sleep with her, she says what will you give me, he says a young goat, and then she says, "Okay, what will you give me as a pledge in the meantime because you don't have a young goat with you." And he says, "Well, what do you suggest?" And she says, "Well, your signet, and cord, and staff." Now a signet was a small stone that was chiseled, much like a seal, and worn on kind of like a necklace around his neck and then of course, he had his staff, and to hand these things over to her was much like giving her his credit card and driver's license until he paid up. Time passes, he eventually goes home and probably feels embarrassed or shame or knows what he's done wrong, because he doesn't go and bring the young goat - no he tells his friend, "Take this young goat, and bring it to the prostitute by the gate." His friend goes and looks and there's no prostitute there and so he starts to ask around, "Has anybody seen the prostitute?" And they're like, "No, no we haven't seen one." And he's like, "Well, my friend, Judah, met a prostitute here and I'm supposed to bring a young goat for my buddy, Judah. He did meet a prostitute here." And they're all like, "There's never a prostitute here." And so he goes back and he's like, "Judah, I asked around, I told everyone you slept with a prostitute around there and everyone was like, no..." And Judah's like, "Shhhh! Be quiet, just stop. Don't say anything, I'm going to be a laughing stock, just let her keep the things." A little more time passes, Genesis 38:24,

"About three months later Judah was told, 'Tamar your daughter-in-law has been immoral. Moreover, she is pregnant by immorality.' And Judah said, 'Bring her out, and let her be burned.'"

We read something like that and we have no faculties, right. We're like wow, this must be some ancient, right, crazy sort of thing to do. But listen, even at that time this is a particularly *harsh* response by Judah. He's got so much animosity built up in him - that woman, is the reason why two of my sons are dead. Now that woman has slept with some man and she's gotten pregnant, bring her out, let her be burned. She's the problem. Let's press pause and talk about this for a few minutes.



## [There is Hope for Those Who have Experienced Injustice]

Listen there is hope for those who experienced injustice. I look around a room like this and the other rooms we're meeting in and I just know by sheer numbers that so many of you have experienced injustice - wrongs done to you at the hands of another. We live in the #MeToo moment. I know this. And we don't just need to talk about sexual issues, although they're included, but people being particularly harsh, or abusive in a multitude of ways, wronging you, harming you, stealing from you, embarrassing you to extreme points. We could go on and on and on but as I talk about this and mention that there's hope for those who've experienced injustice, what floods into your mind, is there stuff? And what have you done with that over the years? Like I just imagine there's these questions right, you're at church this morning. You're trying to reconcile the wrongs done with a God who is love? God where were you? God where are you? Why are you so far? Why were you so far? Do you see, do you hear, do you know, do you care? I want to read to you Psalm 56:8 from the New Living Translation. I just love the tone of it in the New Living. This is God to you.

"You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book."

And you're like, God where are you? Do you see what's happening? He keeps track of everyone. Why are you so far? No, no, no, no, no, he's so close that as literally as the tears roll down your cheeks, God is collecting them in a bottle off your cheek, and storing them. My church family make fun of me cause I often cry as I preach. And so at this point we would all recognize that's a lot of tears for me. That's a lot of bottles collected. Far enough. And some of you are with me right? That's a lot of tears. He's recorded every wrong done to you, every suffering in his book. Hold onto that, we're going to address it. If you're a follower of Jesus here this morning, you, you know that you are Christ's blood, bought, bride. He died so you could live. He went to the cross so you could get eternity with him. Amazing. In Acts 9:4, there's this man named Saul, Saul of Tarsus, who's been persecuting Christians. And Jesus confronts him, and Jesus says, "Saul, Saul, why are persecuting my followers?" No, he doesn't say that. "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting that church over there?" No, no, no, no he doesn't say that, Jesus says, "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting *me*." See Jesus so identifies with you, that the wrongs that have been done to you, it's as if they've been done to your Saviour himself, oh how near he is. Can you get any closer than that? And at the very end of your Bible's in Revelation 21:4, there are these astounding verses where it's described Jesus in eternity that awaits every believer,

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

I'm going to try and illustrate this, what these verses really mean for you. Now there was a man who went to bed one night, and he had a nightmare, terrible, terrible dream. In this dream his wife was killed and his children were killed and it was so real. And he woke up in the morning and realized, "Oh it was just a terrible dream." But you know what he did that morning. He walked up to his wife and he just hugged her a little tighter and he walked up to his kids and hugged them a little tighter and he loved them a little more deeply. Why? For having gone through the tragedy. See what Revelation 21 is telling us, we can't comprehend this, quite. But just imagine with me in eternity, somehow the grace of



the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, his faithfulness and his beauty will somehow be more astounding to us for him having brought us all the way through the tragedies, the injustices, the sorrows, than if they had no ever happened at all. Are you tracking with me? That's amazing grace. That's a beautiful promise. Listen in the cultural moment we live in there is a justice and a healing and a hope that's far greater than even what the world can offer. So robust and so full, but we're not done. Not only that, there is hope for every person in the room who has not only *experienced* injustice, but has been unjust. Not only have we been victims, but we've victimized others. Not only are we those who have been greatly sinned against, but we have all sinned greatly.

### **[There is Hope for Those Who Blame Others for Their Own Sin]**

So second, there is hope for those who blame others for their own sin. Judah blamed Tamar. Do you ever do that - blame others for your stuff? Where'd you learn that? Our earliest relative, Adam and Eve, taught us all of this. See God created this perfect creation and it was so blissful and he created Adam and Eve; people, humanity in his own image, and everything was bliss. Like Adam and Eve would walk in the garden in the cool of the day chatting with God. And one day this serpent comes along and plants a seed of doubt, "God doesn't love you, he's withholding from you, he won't let you eat from that tree and man does that tree look nice. He doesn't love you, listen if you would just take from that tree and eat, then you'd be like God - then you're eyes would be opened." And you know what they did, they believed the serpent, not their God. And they took and ate and all of these experiences flooded into them that they had never experienced before; guilt, shame, they noticed they were naked and for the first time they thought that was a bad thing and they run and they hide and God comes and confronts Adam and says, "What have you done?" And Adam says, "I am so sorry I don't know why I believed the serpent, I should have always believed you. God would you forgive me." Is that how the story goes? That's not how the story goes. Adam says, "It's the woman you gave me." So God goes over to Eve and says, "Eve what have you done?" And she doesn't say, I'm so sorry God, what was I thinking, no - she says, "It was that slithery serpent, so crafty." You know why Millenials are always blaming Baby Boomers - what's the alternative? You know why Baby Boomers are always looking at Millenials and just shaking their heads like, "What are they thinking?" What's the alternative? We can either blame others or invariably the only other option is that we're left to blame ourselves - and we hate to do that. But where does our blame ultimately go - did you hear it from Adam? "It's this woman you gave me." Like he's not just talking about Eve, he's not even really blaming Eve in that statement - who's he blaming? God. "It's that woman, you gave me, God." Proverbs 19, says it just like that in Proverbs 19:3,

"When a man's folly brings *his* way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord."

His screw ups, his stuff, brings him to ruin - as that happens he looks up to God and says, "Why have you done this to me?" This is what we do. It's so mind boggling to me because the creation story, like Adam's alone and he's naming animals and they're pairing up and he's getting more lonely, and then God creates woman and she is perfection - doesn't hurt that she's naked. Right and what happens? Very conservative crowd, I just felt that. [Laughter] You guys got to come out to Chilliwick sometime. [Laughter] Alright, he sees her and in an instant he's like writing her poetry, "Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman." Like, it's like a Bible school student and he sees a girl he's



smitten with, he just, of course he just grabs his acoustic guitar and just strums her a love song. Like this is just basic practice right? This is what Adam's doing. But what happens after the fall? What does he do? It's this woman you gave me; faulty product God. Like what a transition. In *Snowflake Obsidian: Memoir of a Cutter*, the protagonist, this young woman states.

"I started to wonder if God really existed, the world seemed to empty and lonely for there to be a God in it, but I figured he must exist because I kept blaming everything on him."

I want to work through a list with you from Ben Reaach that he made about sins we blame others for, I don't struggle with these obviously, I'm a pastor, but these are for you. Okay [laughter] here we go, let's work through them together - *12 Sins We Blame on Others*,

- Anger: I wouldn't lose my temper if my coworkers were easier to get along with or if my kids were better behaved or if my spouse was more considerate.
- Impatience: I'd be a very patient person if it weren't for all the traffic jams and the long lines in the store, if I didn't have so much to do, I'd be a patient person.

Okay, I just have to level with you here, when I came to do the service last night as a Chilliwackian, obviously I'm making a trip to Abbotsford I had to go to Costco before I came here - right? Get that taken care of - impatience...ahhh like why don't they just get rid of the granola bar row so like we can line up properly. [Laughter] Like can I get an, amen. [Applause] Like, I don't know if my blood boils in any other circumstance so much as having to like cram on either end of that aisle to try and get to all these open rows...come on Costco! Ughhh! But I'm a pastor, I don't struggle with impatience right. If I didn't have so much to do I'd be a patient person.

- Lust: I'd have a pure mind if there weren't so many sexual images in our culture. Right - I would just be whistling hymns and fantasising about how to bless people. If it weren't for the pop up ads and the scantily clad people on commercials. It's the culture I live in, I'm a victim of it, and I can't help it.
- Anxiety: I wouldn't be an anxious person if my life were just a little more secure, if I had a little more money, if I had no health issues, then I wouldn't be anxious.
- Spiritual Apathy: My spiritual life would be so much more vibrant and I'd struggle with sin less if my small group were more encouraging, or if church were more engaging or if the music at church was more lively, or if the music at church was less lively. Or if the preaching was better, like if Jeff Bucknam was actually here this morning. Fair. [Laughter] That I'm, meh, about God is their fault.
- Critical Spirit: It's not my fault that people around me are ignorant and inexperienced.
- Bitterness: If you knew what that person did to me, then you would understand my bitterness. How could I forgive something like that.
- Gossip: The people around me start the conversation and there's no way to avoid hearing what other people happen to say and when they ask me questions I can't avoid sharing what I know.
- Self-pity: I'll never be happy because my marriage, my family, my job, my ministry is just so difficult.
- Selfishness: I would be a generous person if I just had a little more money.



This is a world that we create for ourselves and it's a world where we are not responsible for our sin because it's *everybody* else's fault and we'd sooner blame God than get real about the depths of our sin. That's Judah. Is that you?

That was me for years. I'm ten years into marriage, and five years in the house of cards that I had built crumpled to the ground. See I loved to present the aspects of my life that I wanted people to see. I think a lot of us are really good at this it's the social media persona of ourselves - and we can fake it with friends for a couple of hours as we hang out; it's really hard to fake it with your spouse. See God gives us a spouse - if you're married - as his greatest means of sanctifying us. Our spouse holds up a mirror - is what they do -and shows us the true self. And that is not easy. And I had spun, I had secret sin in my life, and spun so many lies that - look it's easy to remember the truth, it's hard to remember which lie I told when and ... and I just got caught in that and the house of cards fell and was on the brink of it all. And really to summarize what happened, I was shown, like a mirror, my whole self and it wasn't pretty, and I didn't know how to deal with that. And I think that's some of you. What do we do with that? Well we either run, we either blame, or we get real.

Let me show you in the text where things get real. Genesis 38:25, right after Judah has been like, "Bring her out, let her be burned," it says in Genesis 38:25,

"As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, 'By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant.' And she said, 'Please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff.'"

What's fascinating is these words, please identify, the Hebrew word, *hakker-na*, it's the exact same word that Judah used in Genesis 37 when he brought the technicolour dream coat to his dad and said, "*Hakker-na* - please identify who's is it?" Right after he had poured goat's blood on it. And now here we are in Genesis 38 and Tamar has duped Judah with a goat and is now bringing these items before him and says, "*Hakker-na* - please identify, examine, whose are these?" And for the first time in his life it hits him - she wasn't to blame, he was. Oh the hypocrisy of it all, right? He's calling her out to burned for sexual immorality and he's the one who's impregnated her.

A man in our church just became an elder recently and he shared his story with us through that process and also to our men's ministry. And he had given God 98% of his life, and he just had a little 2% of secret sin an area that was just his little pet sin - right. But what he said was so fascinating, the problem was that that 2% started to invade the 98% and make everything hypocritical - make everything feel fake. See the call is to get real, get honest before God. And that's exactly what happens here - look at Genesis 38:6,

"Then Judah identified them and said, 'She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah.' And he did not know her again."

But she came into the family home, she had twin boys. I'm helped by 1 Timothy 1 as we start to talk about getting real about our own sin - like really honest, like fully honest. 1 Timothy 1:15-16 says,

"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. [I am the chief of sinners, Paul is saying.]



But I received mercy for this reason, [listen close] that in me, as the foremost [the chief of sinners], Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.”

What Paul is saying is, “I’m the worst sinner I know. But that’s okay. I can come like that to Jesus and it just shows how glorious his grace is. Cause grace is sufficient even for my sin.” People always say about Paul - “Oh you know the reason why he was the chief of sinners is because he persecuted Christians.” Yeah... look I know a few of you pretty well in this room and I know one or two of your struggles, but I know all of mine. Or at least all of the ones that I’ve come to see. Like that’s what the apostle Paul is saying - he knew his heart like no other - and you know yours. Have you gotten real with God? Listen, I invite you to do that because the gospel can handle it. His grace is sufficient, in fact if you have great sin, bring it to Jesus in repentance and it will magnify the gospel and show how great his grace truly is.

### **[There is Hope in the Gospel for both Victims and Victimizer]**

Let close with this, there’s hope in the gospel for both victims and victimizers. Turn to Matthew 1 as we close. Ah, there’s only one job in my life where I...um... I decided one day I’m never going back - have you ever done that? Like this is done and you just don’t show up anymore? One time I did that - I had this job, I was building trusses and every aspect of this job I just despised. And I even had like my tool belt and hammer, a bunch of tools at this place and it was so not worth it to go back to work even one more day. I was... “Ah, forget the stuff.” And I just moved on. But you know what I didn’t do as I just worked on my resume. I didn’t put that I had worked at that company. And I definitely didn’t put the foreman of that job as a reference; I just pretend that didn’t happen and move on. Well this happened um in antiquity as well except your resume was your family. So people like Herod the Great did this, we’ve discovered this, that Herod would say, “Oh my father is so and so, and his father is so and so, and my relative’s this person, my relative’s that person.” But where there was like a bad apple in the family he just like made no mention of it. But look at Matthew 1, Matthew 1 is where you’re working through like a Bible reading plan and you come across a genealogy and you’re like, “Oh great, I’m going to spend the next 20 minutes reading - like mis-reading - Hebrew names over and over and over again, like what is the point of this?” Well in Matthew 1 there’s a gospel treasure as John Bloom put it, buried in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 there’s a gospel treasure and that treasure is ... five women. Their inclusion in the list is notable because it’s a patrilineal genealogy - there’s your Jeff Bucknam word of the day - patrilineal genealogy. And what that means is it’s a list of fathers and sons; father son, father son, father son - whole page later - father son. But not in Matthew 1. Matthew, the gospel writer, takes pains to list five women and every one is a sorted story. The kind of one that everyone else would avoid - like why would you - you’re not even supposed to name the women and yet you go out of your way to do it. And it’s a prostitute - Rahab, it’s a woman who dressed like a prostitute - pretended to be one in Tamar, some of them are, are cultural outsiders like Ruth and Tamar and Rahab; one’s a teenage mom in Mary. And what I love about Matthew 1 is here’s this woman, Tamar, who’s been so wronged and we read that Jesus came through her line. Talk about a redemption story hey? You feel like damaged goods here this morning? “Oh God can’t use me, such a broken person.” He took Tamar and made a testimony - he wants to do that for you.



But listen that's just the half of it. We also see that Jesus didn't come through the line of Joseph. I mean read Genesis 39 - you know what happens in Genesis 39? Joseph has this moment of sexual temptation and he flees from it. Judah walks right into it. Like wouldn't you think Jesus would come through the line of Joseph, I mean Jesus is the greater Joseph. Jesus is the one who comes in a time of famine to people who are starving spiritually and gives them sustenance. I mean Jesus is the greater Joseph. Joseph - his brothers wanted to kill him but then they sold him into slavery. Jesus had these people who wanted to kill him and they did. Jesus is the greater Joseph, but when we read Matthew 1 what do we see - look at Matthew 1:2,

“Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar.”

What redemption for a sinful man. There is hope for you my broken friends this morning. If you were to go on and read in Genesis 44 you will see that a time of famine has come and all of these brothers, they go off to Egypt and Joseph recognizes his brothers - he's now high up in the second in command in all of Egypt - they don't recognize him, he recognizes them and Joseph says - leave behind Benjamin and the rest of you go back. Now Benjamin was the other favourite son of dad. And Judah steps in and says, “Please let him go and let me stay in his place.” What? Judah? Judah was the one with bright idea in Genesis 37 - let's sell him. And now in Genesis 44 - let me stay, let him go. What happened? Genesis 38 happened, a redemption story happened. God met Judah in his repentance in Genesis 38 and changed his heart. Amen. What a gospel. We are called to do the same.

So as we go to a few minutes of prayer and then we respond with singing, let me say this. If you have been victimized I just want to tell you this morning there is more hope for you, healing for you, then you can ever imagine in the gospel. The gospel is sufficient to heal your broken heart. And if you are such a wretch that you are like - man I don't know a sinner worse than me, neither did the Apostle Paul and the gospel was sufficient for him, the gospel's sufficient for you - we have a big enough gospel that you can get real and honest and his grace is sufficient. So I invite you to do that. Let's pray together.

Jesus, ah my heart's heavy because as we talk about wrongs committed against others, I just know so many have happened to my brothers and sisters in this room and it pains my heart. And I've got some empathy there - oh Lord, you have far more. You are the God of perfect justice, infinite mercy and love, thank you for collecting our tears in a bottle and being more close than we ever realized in our moments of sorrow. And Jesus thank you, that as a mirror is held up to our very own soul's and we get a glimpse of our own depravity, in a deeper way than maybe we'd ever realized before - the gospel can handle that. You died to save - not clean, nice, tidy people - you came to save sinners of whom I am the foremost, and your grace is sufficient, we praise you. In Jesus name, Amen.