



104th Michigan District Convention 2025

Invocation Service Message – Rev. Christopher Bodley

Good morning. We have been moving through this year under the theme “Nourished for the Journey: Remember, Renew and Return,” which is no doubt appropriate, not simply for our district, but even for our lives. And so we give honor and thanks to God for the reality that He is the God who nourishes us. This is the theme that is relevant for us as Kingdom people because God calls us and says that we are children who belong to the Kingdom of light. He has said that we are a kingdom of priests. And yet as we are at this convention, I recognize that we are in mixed company. Are there any Lions fans in here? <laugh> Are there any Packers fans in here? Ooh. All right. So we are a mixed company. Uh, and so because of that, because of our love for football, I'm going to perform or at least share an audible this morning.

And my audible this morning is this: Our sub theme is we can recover. We can recover. As Kingdom people, there are truths which are helpful for us, truths that remind us that as Kingdom people, that God takes us through processes. And these processes oftentimes are purposeful and yet, at the same time, they are problematic. They are purposeful and problematic. And one Kingdom truth is this, that God will lead us or allow us to be led into pressure-filled places. That God will lead us or allow us to be led into pressure-filled places. And why does God do that? Why does God use difficulty? God uses difficulty because He wants to develop us in our walk, in our following Him, in our trust in Him.

Jesus had to go to pressure-filled places and we just heard one of them in the Gospel reading. He had to go to a pressure-filled place after being out in the wilderness for 40 days. But we also know that He went to another pressure-filled place that was called Gethsemane. And Gethsemane literally means the place where there's a pressing of oil. And so when Jesus went to Gethsemane, He entered into Gethsemane. And there, in Gethsemane, He was being pressured. He was being pressed, pressed between the idea of knowing what He believed and knowing that there was bad waiting for Him. Knowing what He believed and knowing that bad was waiting for Him. And in a similar way, we also are taken to pressing places, whereby we are going into places where we know what we believe and yet bad or difficulty will be waiting for us in our life.

And yet it is so important to remember that it's not what happens *to* you, it's what happens *in* you. It's not what happens *to* you, it's what happens *in* you. Because all too often people will talk about what's happened to them, but the greater story is what happens in you in the process. And so the question is how do we handle the pressing in our lives? David had a good way of answering this. And when you read Psalm chapter 16, David says it this way, he said, “I always set the Lord before me.” I always set the Lord before me. And so when a crisis emerges, we need the Lord in our life. We need to have set Him before us. Elijah all of a sudden experienced a crisis, not just simply any sort of crisis, he experienced a crisis of faith. And what had happened was that we read that he had just had an incredible, a powerful victory with the prophets of Baal. And then in the next breath, Jezebel decides that she's going to tell him, verbally, “I'm putting a contract out on your life.” And what does any strong man do when he meets a strong woman? He runs, he runs.

And so he ran because of this threat from Jezebel, even though God had given him victory over 450 false prophets that time. And so there are times in our life and in our world where like Elijah, all of a sudden a tornado will all of a sudden unexpectedly show up and we will begin to spiral emotionally and spiritually. And yet when those things come into our life, we are called to be able to respond differently. And yet because of our fragile nature, we don't. And like Elijah, when we get to those places, we will make broken statements because of our broken heart. And

Elijah's statement was this, "I'm the only one left." Any of us ever said that I'm the only one left that's trusting God and loving God. I'm the only one left in the Michigan District. I'm the only one left following Jesus.

Sometimes we put ourselves in a position whereby we think we are the only ones doing what God has called us to do. A crisis of faith. Crisis of faith can occur. One, because we are seeking to be obedient to the assignment that God has called us to do. But another reason why we can experience a crisis of faith is because we have been guilty, no doubt of taking our eyes off of the Lord, of taking our eyes off of the Lord. You know, it's, it's easy to all of a sudden to settle into our routine, to settle with what has been comfortable. To settle in our position. To settle in our possessions. And I dare say even to settle into our pride. And so we had to understand that oftentimes when we begin to settle, we should understand that God would allow us to experience an unsettling in our life.

It shouldn't surprise us because Jesus said it. He said, he said it this way, that "If you want to follow me, you must be willing to deny yourself. Take up your cross and follow me." And so because of that, we should expect that there will be uncertainty, that there will be things that will happen that will in some way push us and disturb us. But the good news is this, is that if when, if God is the author and the finisher of our faith, then we know that God is in our story and that we can recover. That God is in our story and we can recover. And we can recover because God has given to us the divine ability to recover. And we can recover when we are able to at least put two powerful spiritual disciplines at work in our life. Two powerful spiritual disciplines at work in our life.

The first spiritual discipline is this: the power to remember. The power to remember. We have to remember that first of all, that Jesus deeply loves us. And then we have to also remember this. We have to remember what God told us before we went into our crisis. Let me say it again: that we are to remember what God said to us and spoke to us before we went into our crisis. This is what Jesus did when He was with His disciples in the gospel of John. He told the disciples in John chapter 13. He said, "I'm telling you this now so that when it happens, you'll be able to believe in who I am." He told them what was going to happen before it happened. And when He said that, He said in the context that He was telling them, He said, "I want you to know that someone in here is going to betray me, but even when it does happen, I want you to know, and I still want you to believe who I am because I told you it was going to happen before it happened."

God has already told us before a crisis happens that crisis is coming. And so because of this reality, we can still believe that Jesus is still God. And so God tells us this because He wants us to possess courage in our crisis. To possess courage in our crisis. And so when courage comes, He says, "I need you to remember, I need you to remember that first of all, that in this world you will have trouble. So take heart, I have overcome the world. I need you to remember this, that if you abide in me and I abide in you, you will still bear much fruit. I need you to remember that when you have trouble, I will send you the comforter who will help you. I need you to remember that God's grace is sufficient for you when you think that you don't have anywhere else to go or nowhere else to turn." When we remember, we have the ability to recover. The ability to recover.

The second spiritual discipline that we should also make sure that we engage in when crisis comes is that we need to make sure that we engage in the power of rejoicing. The power of rejoicing. And it's not that the idea that we deny that there is pain, it's just that we were reminded that God is present in our pain. I remember, our sainted, Dr. Walter Maier when I was in seminary. He loved Philippians chapter four. And many of us who went to Fort Wayne, remember that Philippians chapter four. And he talked about that there is an antidote to worry. And so I dare say to you that Philippians chapter four reminds us that there is an antidote to worry that when there is worry that we ought to worship, and one of the ways that we worship is when we decide that we are going to rejoice and be glad in it. Because this *is* the day that the Lord has made and we will choose to rejoice and be glad in it.

And so we rejoice for the sake of the one who was set before Him, Jesus, who endured the cross, who scorned the shame and then sat at the right hand of God. We rejoice because of this reality that the sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us. We rejoice because sorrow may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. We rejoice because suffering produces perseverance. Perseverance produces character. And character produces hope. And hope does not disappoint because we have the God of hope. And so the reality is this, is that we can recover [from] whatever it is that we are experiencing in our life,

whether it is emotional, financial, relational, spiritual, that we can recover. Am I speaking to some resurrection people here this muggy Monday morning? That we have, that we are people that have the resurrection DNA inside of us today, that as a resurrection people you can and we can recover. That the same spirit that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead is the same spirit that also lives inside of us. When difficulty comes, it is He that raises us up.

When difficulty comes, I'm reminded of a poem where it says it this way: When things go wrong as sometimes they will; When the road you're treading seems all appeal. When the funds are low and the debts are high and you want to smile, but you have to sigh when cares are pressing, you're down a bit. Rest if you must. But don't you quit. Don't give up. Though the pace seems slow, you may succeed with yet another blow. Often the struggler has given up when he might have captured the victor's cup and he found out too late when night came down, how close he was to the golden crown. Success is failure turn inside out. So stick to the fight. When your heart is hit is when things seem tough that you mustn't quit. We need to keep pressing on 'cause sorrow comes in the evening, but joy comes in the morning. Don't you quit. The race is not given to the swift nor the battle to the strong. Therefore, don't you quit.

We need to remember this, that the battle is not yours. It's the Lord's. We need to remember that if God is for us, who can be against us? Don't you quit. We need to remember that, that God says that I will make sure that those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings like eagles. They shall run and not get weary. They shall walk and not faint. Don't you quit because you can recover, I can recover and we can recover because of resurrection power through Jesus Christ. God bless you and know whatever it is that we are facing and whatever it is we are in, we can recover. Amen.