

Good morning. Good to be here in front of you this morning and to have a chance to speak from the heart and things that I've been thinking about. I'm glad to see that we're full, that there are so many of you who made it a point to be here for the faculty and staff members as well who are gathered. I trust that it will be helpful to you in some ways to think about the events of the last several weeks, if not months, and to think about them both in terms of our life here as a community and your life as a Christian in this world. I appreciate the opportunity to come before you today to do that.

I will be suspending the start of my semester series until the next time I speak, which I believe is next week before the homecoming weekend. That series is entitled Strong Medicine for the Soul, and I'm very much looking forward to doing that. But today, I wanted to set that aside and speak specifically to both some observations and some implications, as well as some perspective and some encouragement for you in light of everything that's transpired over the last week or so.

Tonight at seven o'clock, in BL 210, I will be present in the room to have some conversation and to take any questions that you might have. I think it would be good to do that. I often, in the course of an academic year, have informal times with you as students, the Coffees with the President. We don't have one scheduled in and around the vicinity of all that's going on. We'll take an opportunity tonight rather impromptu, but student life will get the word out. And tonight at seven o'clock over in BL210, I'll be in the room to answer any questions that you might have about this or anything else and to share some additional thoughts.

But this morning in the chapel time, I do want to talk a little bit about what's going on and how we might want to think about it and respond to it. I've been thinking on these issues a long time. My wife and I were talking over the weekend, and I said, I've been thinking on these issues. I wish I could say for days, I wish I could say for weeks, I wish I could say for months, but I've been thinking on these things for years.

In this last week, you have experienced a defining moment, regardless of your familiarity with the individuals involved, regardless of how familiar you were with Charlie Kirk or what your thoughts are about his work. You have experienced something that is a defining moment for you as a generation. Previous generations have experienced other kinds of defining moments. A generation before you was about to celebrate the anniversary or to commemorate the anniversary of 9/11 when the events of last week transpired and Charlie Kirk was publicly assassinated. That attack on 9/11 was a defining moment for Americans of every generation. It marked life in our country and our culture for at least a decade. Generations before you, those that were your age or thereabouts in the 1960s, experienced multiple public assassinations over the course of their most formative years, beginning with the President all the way through his brother, who was running for office, as well as Martin Luther King Jr. Those moments of violence have a way, especially when they're played out publicly, of impacting not just our own individual lives how we think, but our collective life as a nation, as a society, as a culture, and in our smaller communities.

When I was just a little bit younger than most of you who are in the room here now as students, I and other people of my generation watched the President be shot on television by a deranged assassin who, after coming out of the hotel, the President was on his way to a limousine, and a stranger stepped out from the crowd and began firing the President. We watched as Ronald Reagan took a bullet and was rushed to the hospital unsure of his condition. Then we watched as that was played over and over and over again on the news, that clip of a President being shot. The generation that experienced the death of Abraham Lincoln did not have television or social media to continually hold before it graphic and brutal images of that kind of violence. This is, for better or for worse, beyond your control, a defining moment for this generation and for the culture and nation in which we find ourselves. I want to share a few concerns and observations this morning that are born of my concern for the world. I have not in my lifetime witnessed what we are witnessing now in terms of the geopolitical uncertainty and the kinds of violence that is potentially erupting around the world. So I'm concerned. I'm concerned for the world. I'm concerned for the church. I'm concerned for our nation. I'm concerned for this community. And I'm concerned for you as students. Because I think the way in which you think about what is occurring around us matters a great deal. It will not just shape how you live going forward. It will reflect on what you have already built in terms of your understanding and

your faith and your theology. Now is a time to be intentional in what we are thinking and how we are thinking. And so out of those concerns, I would like to share some thoughts.

As I said, we were visited this last week by public violent brutality. Over the course of the last several weeks, as Dean Gordon reminded us in his communication last week, in schoolyards and in school buildings, in churches, on trains, at universities, and in the streets across the country and around the world, we are witnessing with our very own eyes, brutality, human brutality against other humans. Here and around the world, in Europe, in Ukraine, in South America, even today, in the Middle East, and in Africa, where Christians are being slaughtered for their faith.

The world is a violent and brutal place. And it is, I think, helpful for us as Christians to think about that. So I want to share a few observations and make some comments for you to think on. First of all, I have had an observation that I've been sharing with this community and beyond for quite some time. I've written on it, We've talked about it. The world is divided in extremely dangerous ways presently, and it's divided in ways that aren't even as simple as two sides. It's not two sides. The world isn't just divided into two sides two armies, two parties, two sets or categories of people. The world is divided in the most fractured and splintered way I can imagine when you think about the social divides that exist both in this country and around the world. The tensions that exist over race and ethnicity, the kinds of divisions that exist over economics, over wealth, and over poverty. We see such division on social issues all around us, cultural issues.

We are not just divided over whether or not human sexuality should be viewed in a traditional sense, as the Bible outlines it in a way that reflects our Christian beliefs and those who reject that. People are all over the place on that issue. Even people who might uphold a more traditional view of something are conflicted about how to actually live that out or communicate it or to think about it. The cultural divides are real and they are powerful and they're dangerous. The political divides. Those of you who are in my class know now we're talking about this. The country, nations, the world has always experienced political divides. But we are experiencing something besides social and cultural and political divides. There are spiritual divides, not even between those who are of faith, not between Christians and non Christians, but even within the Christian faith, the spiritual divide about what's going on and how we should think about things. People are seeking for answers, and other people are criticizing those who are looking for answers. People in faith communities are trying to be more winsome to the world while they're watching the world slaughter them for their beliefs. The divides that we see are not just divides where we disagree. It's a divisiveness that is manifesting itself in opposition. We don't just have competing worldviews today. We have opposing worldviews that are in conflict with one another. And some of you sitting in this room are conflicted internally because your worldview is not coherent, is not congruous, is not whole. I even I think that the way that these events have unfolded have actually underscored that divisiveness that we see in the world along social and cultural, political, and even spiritual lines. I want to make some observations first about violence. I've talked over the course of the last several days and even last week and before with the school shootings and other things that have taken place, people who are dealing in very serious and profound personal ways with violence. How could this be? How could we find ourselves in this situation? That kind of brutality that human beings visit on other human beings is reproachable in the most graphic and visceral way. It is brutality that should disturb us. And the world is searching for answers. How could this happen? And when they look for their answers, they say, Well, we're bad people doing bad things to one another. So let's fix it. Let's actually pass policies that make it impossible for people to hurt one another. Let's have rules that actually limit whatever it might be, weapons or access or whatever it is.

Trust me, whatever you take away from human beings in this sinful world, they will find a way to destroy one another with their bare hands and the rocks on the road. Because sin and the Fall brought this upon us. I told my class Last week, the third person on earth killed the fourth person on earth. The third person on earth killed the fourth person on earth, his brother, in a jealous rage. Look, Christians, we should be dismayed, we should be discouraged, disappointed, saddened, even afraid. All of those are appropriate responses. Surprise should not be one of them. Violence and brutality has plagued us since the the Fall. The question is now, how will you frame that in your mind? How will you deal with it? How will you seek to resolve it, to mitigate it? But being surprised by violence should not be born

out of a naivety or a Pollyannish view of the world that says this should never happen. It didn't happen prior to sin and the Fall. We were created to enjoy God in that perfect fellowship every day. He gave us all that we need, and sin and the Fall have destroyed it.

When I'm asked, what do you think the answer is for violence? I think there are things that we could do as a culture, as a society. There are things we can do legally. There are things we can do to change the sentimentality of our culture regarding violence. It will only reduce it. It will only cause us to think about. The only way that it is eliminated is in the return of Jesus Christ, who makes all things right in the final judgment. It is the creation of the new heavens and the new Earth and all things being put back in order. Because violence in this world is a manifestation of the disorder that sin has brought upon it. But in addition to being surprised, there are practical realities we deal with with regard to violence. This week, last week, we saw them, and some of you have experienced it. We've been horrified by it. Horrified by it. We should have been horrified by it every time it surfaced in our lifetime. Whenever a beating heart is stopped, we should recognize the gravity of that. We should always be horrified by it.

The problem is that there are others who are enamored with it. We cannot not help but look upon it. In some twisted and perverted way, it draws us in and attracts us. That is dark, brothers and sisters. That not only would we be horrified by violence, but that we might find in some way being enamored with it. And part of what's happened to us, and I think it's manifest itself in recent days, is, yes, we are horrified by it. Some are enamored with it. But to a large degree, culturally, we've been desensitized to it. And that is equally dangerous and dark. I do not really want to go down a whole lot of rabbit trails. I have many things I want to share, not enough time to do it. But you know there was an old adage, be careful little eyes, what you see, be careful little ears, what you hear. There's a sense in which, oh, people are just restricting me from things because they think they're not good for me. Because not everything is good for you. If you find it easy to laugh at or to dismiss or ignore virtual violence, to glorify it in games and in movies, it is not that big of a step to do the same in real life.

The desensitization around violence in our culture is a dangerous thing. It undermines our view as Christians of the sanctity of life. The sanctity of life is not just a word that applies to the unborn. But if you think about our position as Christians, defending the sanctity of life and the rights of the unborn. Others, what they do is say, No, that's not real violence. No, that's not real death. That's not a real human being. It's an attempt to break down the dignity and value of life itself. I don't see much difference between that and glorifying brutal, gruesome, graphic violence and death in your video games and film. To celebrate that virtually, it's not a big step to being desensitized to it in the real world. In sports, they say this, you practice like you play. If you take these things lightly in the virtual world, you are not far from taking them lightly in the real world. We would do well as a culture and a society, certainly as a community here and in our individual lives as Christians, to be careful what we are consuming and the way in which it is affecting our sensibilities and judgment.

It's not about being legalistic and saying, You can't do this because Christians don't do that, and we won't know you are a Christian if you're doing that, or you won't look like a Christian or sound like a Christian. I could care less about those legalistic issues. No one who observed a rule ever stood before God and said, Let me in, I observe the rules. It doesn't work that way. But when you partake in those things that are bad for you, they are bad for you and the people around you. I think this issue of violence deserves some careful consideration on our part as Christians, and I would encourage you to be careful. The exhortation in Scripture to think on these things whatsoever is good, whatsoever is pure, whatsoever is noble, those are the things we should be dwelling on. If you are spending an inordinate amount of time dealing with and enjoying and being entertained and titillated by darkness and violence, you share something in common with the people who perpetuated violence in the last several weeks. It has no place in our life as Christians. The way in which we live and think about those things is a testimony to the world that is watching us. We, of all people, should value human life, men and women made in the image and likeness of God. We should take that very seriously. I would encourage you to be careful.

In the aftermath of that violence, we watched responses that while I think the actions have been overwhelming and defining and impactful in some of those powerful and profound ways, the

responses to the violence of recent days has been troubling to me in my soul in ways I can't even begin to describe. That people would ignore or step over someone who is dying in their midst in a public setting, like we saw on that train last week. I cannot fathom One, whether it was fear or it was indifference, it doesn't matter. We run to those who need. It's what we do. It's not just what Christians do. It's in us in common grace. This is what we should be doing. The responses of indifference to violence is one thing, but I have lost hours of sleep thinking that people have celebrated what they saw last week. It is the most monstrous and inhuman way to respond to what transpired that I can imagine. The emotional celebration, justification, those things are among the most twisted and perverse things I've seen in my lifetime.

This isn't the first time we've seen it. People celebrated some of those assassinations in the '60s. People celebrated attempted assassinations on presidents in the past. People celebrated Abraham Lincoln's assassination. We've seen this before. This is being played out, though, in front of us multiple, dozens, if not hundreds of times in a day and week because of our phones, our screens, social media.

Those responses should shake us to our very core. I think what they belie in us culturally and in this day, not just in America, but around the world, because it is unhinged as well, is that over the last two decades or more, as we have been oriented to not just be honest and be emotional and be expressive, but to actually allow our emotions to drive our judgments and sensibilities and moral decisions. That's what happens. You feel anger, therefore you are justified to express celebration at the assassination of a public figure or the murder of an innocent person. That somehow you feel justified to do that because you feel that emotion. You should be checking that emotion and say, to come to a conclusion other than this is tragic and wrong is a mistake.

Just because you feel your emotions pushing you in a particular direction doesn't justify that reaction. If you're thinking now that I am totally afraid of what has happened, or you're celebrating what has happened, or you think this is a call to war, if your emotions are pushing you in that direction, count on this, that's wrong. Stop being pushed by your emotions. The kinds of responses that we've seen have, I think really manifest that emotional orientation. It's completely natural to have an emotional reaction to what happened last week. It would be inhuman not to. It should move us to disgust or fear. It should move us to anger. But what we have seen in recent days is a manifestation of a justified hatred that actually calls for murder. And that should bother us. We haven't just witnessed a natural unfolding of emotions and emotional reaction to what transpired last week. We're watching the manifestation of a serious problem in our worldview, which is that if you feel it, it is right and justified. That is just not how life is to be lived, and it certainly isn't Christian. Read the fruits of the spirit. Read the list of the fruits of the spirit, and you will find what? Self control. Self control.

The kind of hatred that has been openly expressed across all mediums, and even in personal conversations, is very disturbing. Not surprising because I acknowledge the impact of sin, but it should be confronted. We also have witnessed something else that has been justified, which is the unfiltered expression of emotion. I tried to get in my head how many times I've mentioned this to you over the course of the last several years in chapel. When I say, be careful about this cultural phenomenon of your unfiltered expression of emotion, it's not because I'm worried you're going to say something, it offends me or offends your parents or offends a faculty member or offends a donor or offends the institution. It will damage you and everyone around you if you don't check yourself. If you don't bring some mental and emotional discipline to your life. It will do damage. Proverbs talks about a kind word turns away wrath, and words that are released are like arrows. They can't be taken back. They do their damage, and the damage is done.

Let me encourage you, as you're watching all of this emotion around you, be critical of and condemn wrong expressions of emotion. Call people and your friends to responsible emotional life and living. And be very careful about the temptation to express yourself in ways that are unfiltered. You know where to express yourself in ways that are unfiltered? Like the Psalmist before Almighty God. Because he knows what's in your heart already. He knows how much darkness and deceit exist in the human heart. Loves us anyway, redeemed us through his son, and looks at us as those who are forgiven through the blood of Jesus. You want to express yourself in an unfiltered way? Pray. Don't go

to Facebook. Pray. Go to God. Honest dealing with our emotions is important, but we need to bring some discipline to bear. I think that what we've seen in terms of the emotional reaction in response to what transpired last week, I think it's important to remind ourselves as Christians that it's important for us to be right-minded and clear-minded and biblically-minded. You have been given an opportunity to be here now with the people who are serving here under this mission that you should not take for granted. We do not exist to give you a credential so that you can get a job and earn a living.

That's part of what we do, and we hope that that happens for you. Our job is to make you ready for life in a world that it will not just influence you, it will threaten you. You have been given an opportunity to be here, to learn to think Christianly, biblically, to get your theology straight, to get your view on all other dimensions of humanity through the arts and sciences and your professional development. There's an attempt being made here on your behalf every day in a Christ-centered, biblically-oriented university to help you build a coherent whole so that you can deal with the monstrous mess that reared its head last week, that you can think about it rightly and keep living your life in a world that has all of these paradoxical threats and opportunities in front of you on a regular. You've been given this opportunity to study here now by God's grace and his sovereign leading. Let me just tell you, do not squander it. Do not take it for granted. Make every day count. Learn, grow, attend to your life, attend to your spiritual life, your intellectual life, your emotional life, your social life. Now is your opportunity to do that. Don't take it for granted.

Another observation about the last several days is the rhetoric that has arisen. It didn't arise last week. It's been going on for months, if not years. In fact, it's as old as sin in the Fall. The words that permeate our world matter. I tell you as students all the time, your range of thought is inextricably tied to your vocabulary. Without words, you can't really think about ideas. You actually have to do this. I was telling someone over the weekend the issue with the word awesome. I've asked people, What is awesome? This is what they said, A thing that you really like. Well, first of all, your English teacher are going to be quite disappointed because you don't define an adjective by referring to it as a noun. Awesome is not a thing that. That's a noun. Awesome is an adjective that describes something that moves you to awe. That's a technical difference, distinction that matters. The rhetoric of the day is so sloppy with vocabulary that it's actually creating the context that we're living in right now. It's actually fueling it. It's a problem.

Do you know that fascist is a technical term? You can call someone you don't agree with a fascist. That does not make them a fascist. I've been called a fascist. I've been called a libertarian. I am neither. They are polar opposites. I don't know how you could be both. The issue is we use words in such a sloppy manner to accomplish some objective for us personally. You are in a college and university. You're learning, your vocabulary should be strengthened, and you need to understand those are technical terms. They shouldn't be bandied about flippantly. The rhetoric, not just the hateful nature of it and the tone of it, but the irresponsibility that is manifest across the spectrum, it doesn't matter whether you're talking about political figures or your pastors or your teachers or your friends or newscasters, the kind of irresponsibility the responsibility with words that we see in our culture right now is only making this mess worse. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, there were people who were trying to rid the world of Adolf Hitler. There were people who were trying to do that. There's a pastor that all of you read while you're here who was involved in that movement in Germany, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

There were people in the 1930s and '40s who decided that it was necessary to take up violence in that form to rid the world of a force of evil that was senselessly slaughtering millions of people and spreading a cloud of darkness across the world in threat to civilization. His name was Hitler. And the world decided that he must be stopped at all costs. So when you call a political opponent or someone you don't like Hitler, what are you saying? They should be stopped at all costs. It isn't just irresponsible with vocabulary terms. It's attempting to invoke and incite in us an emotional reaction which leads to the justification of a moral decision that is not based upon reason and responsibility, but rather rage and emotional reaction. The tone of the rhetoric is a problem. But I think it's important for you as Christians to understand something. There is a distinction between vitriol and being polemical. I imagine Google will get hit on those two words quite a bit as the day unfolds. There's a difference between those two things. There are men and women throughout the history of humanity

in the Bible who have been called to be polemical voices for the gospel, for God, for his law, for his word, for truth.

That is different than spewing hatred. Do not allow yourself to be convinced that what transpired last week means we should never speak with force about truth, about sin, about faith, about the gospel. That would be a mistake. Not every one of you, thankfully, in this room, are called to be a polemicist, to step into the arena of ideas and duke it out with those you disagree with in a debate. But it's possible to do that without vitriol, without hatred, without irresponsibility. So the rhetoric, people will tell you, the tone is bad. It's horrible. The rhetoric in the country today and around the world is horrible. But if we actually got to responsible debate and polemics, We might actually find ourselves making some progress. The problem is right now, the goal is to motivate people to action by playing upon their fears or making them afraid, by controlling their thoughts and ideas or inciting in them an emotional reaction to provoke them to some action. It's born out of frustration, but it's amplified by the fact that people don't hold to coherent worldviews. My guess is, as they search for a singular, cohesive, cogent motive for the assassination last week, they will not find it. They will not find it in the mind of a fragmented, disturbed, incoherent worldview.

Be careful about the language, the rhetoric, the words, the tone that you use, that you ingest, that you embrace, or that you champion. Be careful. Be careful. Some implications. I've said this on numerous occasions, we struggle as Christians with the world, the flesh, and the devil. It's a battle. It's a battle. But we were told that. We were told that the world will hate us. No Christian was ever killed for digging a well. But they were burned to death and martyred and murdered for saying, Sinful humanity needs a savior. There is no other way to forgiveness and redemption and the promise of eternal life, but through faith in the shed blood of Jesus and his glorious resurrection. For that, they will hate us. For that, they will kill us. But we keep doing it because Christians have done that from the very beginning. We don't despair. We keep moving forward. But the world, the flesh, and the devil want to push you or pull you in directions that are off the rails, spiritually, theologically. I think the pushing and is only going to get worse in the weeks and months to come.

You will see an increased politicization of all of this, as though the solution to this or the source of all of this is somehow politics. I've been teaching politics here since 1994 in one way or another. I'm relatively certain, as certain can be, that politics is not the cause or the answer to what ails us. There will be attempts to preoccupy you with things, to have you overthink things, to overload you with the burden of what is going on in the world. We were not wired to have 24 hours, seven day a week, Saturation with things that are happening all over the world beyond our control. So I want to ask you to be careful about the ways in which you are allowing yourself to be pushed and pulled by the things that are going on in the world around us, to guard one another from being pushed and pulled unnecessarily. Be careful not to see what is going on as something that can be answered or blamed upon politics. It will lead to irresponsible disengagement with that, or worse, drifting towards an enamourment with anarchy as though that would solve our problem. Be careful not to be so overwhelmed by what is going on that you miss the blessings of life and the calling upon your life to live for and to serve the Lord Jesus, to enjoy the good things that he has given us.

Despair is a dangerous thing. If you are reading good literature or watching good film, you will actually see a recurring theme about people coming to the point of despair and someone encouraging them not to do so. When I was a teenager watching what was going on in the world around me, I felt some of that despair. Someone who had a profound influence on me, not a Christian leader, not a pastor, used to say, Despair is a mortal sin. Bill Buckley used to say, Despair is a mortal sin. You wouldn't feel it if you had faith that God is living through history with you. Hold your hope and faith high and intact. Keep your perspective in the long term. We as Christians are not hopeful because we don't have a choice or we're trying to whistle through the graveyard. We're hopeful because the victory has been won and Jesus will return. He has been raised and so will we be raised. Keep things in perspective. As you respond and react to what is going on around you, be careful not to drift towards apathy or indifference. Don't hide in fear. Don't think there's no place for you to be a Christian out there.

Don't get preoccupied with the glory and romanticism of fighting. Rather, just be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ who proclaims the gospel as well as lives it out. Some of you live in this world, and so it

affects you. It affects all of us. There are times when I think that we believe that the worst thing that could happen to us in this world is that the world would not like us, that the world would reject us, that the world would hate us, that the world would target us, that the world would mock us or scorn us or try to get rid of us, which is exactly what they did to Jesus. We are his people, the sheep of his flock. He is the good shepherd. The Psalm that Dean Gordon read for us speaks powerfully to our place in this world and our need to be dependent upon God. So let me challenge you to keep things in perspective. Attend to your faith. How do you do that? Bible says faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word. You must be people of the Book. You must be people of the Book. You have to shape a theological understanding of this world and God and yourselves.

You have to think rightly about it. You have to build that idea. You have to pray. You have to keep serving Christ. You have to find in God's grace the ability to hold firm no matter what is going on around you, to live and proclaim the gospel, to live and proclaim biblical truth. God is sovereign, and he is at work even in these dark and disturbing days. And God is Triune, the sovereign Father of the universe, the maker of all things, is its righteous and holy judge. His son is our Lord and savior, present at creation. He is our Lord and our savior, and he is returning. God has given us the Holy spirit to indwell us. May we pray and live in light of this, that God's spirit would use his word to do Jesus's work in us to conform us to the image of Christ, to the glory of God for all eternity. Folks, if you put that in your mind's eye, it's hard to go wrong. Maintain your fellowship with God and with one another, but challenge and exhort one another and spur one another on to write thinking and good deeds.

As the Psalm was read, he is the good shepherd, gives us all we need, whether it feels like it or not. Jesus amplifies that in John 10, where he calls himself the good shepherd and refers to us as his sheep. I can think of no better way to move on than to think on the person and work of Jesus Christ. We talk about this here all the time, the importance of our being centered on Jesus and the word. It's not a platitude. It's not a marketing gimmick. It's not even really designed to get you through your day. It's designed to prepare us for moments like these because they will come for the rest of your life.

Let's pray. Father in heaven. We thank you for your goodness and for your grace. For your loving kindness, your faithfulness, for your mercies which are new every morning. Even in moments of tragedy and loss, of fear and uncertainty, In the darkest of days, we know that you are still faithful God, whose mercies are new every morning. Father, we know the far-reaching impact of sin and the fall, which has distorted and ruined everything around us, that has separated us from you humanity from yourself, that has plagued us from the moment of its appearance.

Father, we thank you for even in the midst of that fall, you made it clear that there would be a way, that you would make a way for redemption and forgiveness and restoring our fellowship with you. We thank you for your son, Jesus Christ, for the good news that he is, for all that he accomplished, for all that he has done for us and on our behalf. We pray that you would give us the grace to keep our eyes fixed upon him, the author and finisher of our faith. No matter what storms rage around us in this world, in our country, in our lives, that you would give us the grace to keep our eyes fixed upon him. We pray for the grace to be a blessing and encouragement to one another, to uphold one another in prayer, to challenge and exhort one another, to encourage and edify one another, to bless one another. Father, we pray for the world. We pray for your church in this world. Embolden the body of Christ, to go forth with the good news of Jesus without timidity and without apprehension and without apology. To call men and women in this world to repentance and faith in him alone.

We pray for our nation. We pray for the turmoil and tension that exists in it. We ask for your grace to make us salt and light in the midst of this turmoil. We pray for all those victims of senseless violence, for all those who are dealing with and reeling from public violence that disturbs so many because we cannot get away from it. We do pray for the Kirk family. We pray for his supporters and for his detractors. We pray for those who have been mortified by his murder and for those who are celebrating it. We pray that your spirit would be at work to draw people to your son to cast from their eyes the scales of spiritual blindness.

We pray, Father, that as we look and see the fields that are white with harvest, you might send

laborers to do your work. Father, I pray for this community, for the men and women who study here and serve here. We pray that you would be at work in our midst, meet our needs, where we are individually, meet our needs collectively. Keep us in your care. Father, I pray for the work that is in front of us, to study, to learn, to build an understanding of you and ourselves in this world in which we live that is reflective of the truths of your word, the power of the gospel, and the commitment to your glory.

We pray, give us a sense of calling in the life you have appointed for us here now, to not take it for granted, But to capitalize on all that has been set before us, the opportunities to learn, to study, to grow. Pray, Father, that you would bring good out of all that we have experienced, for you alone can do that. No man, no woman, no force, no ideology, no nation, no government can bring good from what was meant for evil. But that is what you do, and we pray that you would do it. Give us the faith to trust you for that. We pray all these things in Christ's name. Amen.