

Depeche Mode Band: “If I could just hide the sinner inside, and keep him denied, how sweet life would be. If I could only be free from the sinner in me.

O Holy, Loving, God, we come humbly before you to give you thanks – for the gift of this day, for the gift of our very lives, for your constant and unconditional love for us. We come with gratitude, because gratitude takes us to a place beyond ourselves. Gratitude humbles us because we see out of a different lens. Gratitude makes us realize that we need help, that we are not in charge, and we acknowledge that in so many ways you bless us and make your presence known to us. And gratitude also broadens our view of you. It makes us know that we are loved and cared for, and that you will be there with us and for us, no matter what happens. And that is why we also come today to confess that we are sinners – in need of a Savior. We don’t like to admit it – we wish we could hide the thoughts we have, we wish we could be rid of those actions we regret, we wish we were free from the being the person we sometimes are. But yet, Lord, the real freedom is coming to you, knowing that you promise love and forgiveness and grace and mercy to all who come to you in repentance. You promise us a new start – day by day, even minute by minute sometimes. And with the burden of our sin now relieved, then truly that is a sweet life. And, it makes us want to live more and more like you want us to live. It makes us want to be more like Christ, it makes our restless hearts want to find our rest in you. And so please accept our confessions, and our gratitude for your forgiveness.

Lord, there are those on our hearts today that we wish to bring to your attention. We ask a special blessing on the family of Billy Graham. We thank you for his courage to be an evangelist in a world that often doesn’t want to hear it. We thank you that he was an example of someone committed to his Christian faith, and who had the desire to spread your word across this land and around this world. May his death inspire us to be willing to share with others our love for you, and the joy and hope we find in a relationship with you. And O God, we have family and friends who are in need – of healing, of direction, of discipline, of strength. There are those we don’t know but who need our prayers – those in parts of the world where there is limited water, food, medical care, hope. We so often take these things for granted, that we can’t imagine being without. But help us to have hearts of compassion and care and awareness of the plight of humans throughout the world. Lord, there are others that we wish to lift up.

And now, in the Spirit of wanting to be a church that is an example of your love in the world, let us pray the John Wesley prayer...

Dear Lord, we want John Wesley to be a strong and vital church in our community. And we want to be guided by your vision and plan for us. As we move into the future, please lead us all in our thoughts, our discussions, and our decisions. Show us what you would have us do and how you would have us do it. And help us always remember that John Wesley is your church, not ours – may your will be done. In Christ's name we pray. Amen