Speaker 1:

Good morning. It's a delight to share with you today, or whenever, wherever you are viewing this broadcast.

Streaming services are doing a booming business. Maybe you've watched a few movies lately. Maybe you've seen the Pixar movie A Bug's Life. Produced in 1998, it tells the story from the perspective of the anthill. The queen aunt and her daughter Princess Anna lead and ant colony which works most of the summer to produce an offering of food for the grasshoppers. Grasshoppers arrive the same time each year to eat the food gathered for them. Now, the offering is really given through extortion as the grasshoppers have threatened them. Emerged the hero, Flick, a regular ant with a knack for invention. He heads out of the ant colony to go and find warrior bugs to rescue the colony. Well, he does discover group of circus performers, who he thinks are tough bugs to scare off those grasshoppers. I won't give away all the details, but at the end of the movie, which of course ends with Flick being the hero and the ant colony being rescued, the camera pans away from the scene to show us all that this has happened in a very tiny area at the bottom of a single tree, sitting in a vast panoramic sight.

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not comparing us to ants, but I am suggesting that our viewing of a single event, a small part of our overall experience can not be seen as a good understanding of the truth. Did you know the longest discourse recorded of God's voice is found in the Book of Job? Job from the land of Uz is described as a blameless, upright man who fears God. Job, 1 and 3 records, "he was the greatest man among all the people of the East."

Now, Satan challenges of God, of course, he believes in you, but take away all of his prosperity and he will curse you. So God allows much suffering to come to Job. That's the theme of the first 37 chapters and the narrative of his wife and friends to his state. Eventually, Job raises his complaint to God, and Job 38:41 records God's response with some pointed questions. "Job, where were you when I laid the foundations, set its dimensions, put its footings in place, laid the cornerstone of the earth? Have you ever given orders to the morning given Dawn it's place? Have you ever seen the storehouse of snow and hail? Do you send lightning bolts on their way?" The point of God's questioning is, of course, to answer the accusation that the suffering of Job is attributed to God, that He is somehow absent from our presence, either unaware or uncaring about our human struggle.

Now, not to equate the great biblical story of Job with a Pixar film. Here's my point. To understand the whole story based on a very small setting and a very limited time is to misunderstand the real nature and purpose of God. Our finite, enormously limited view is that of mortal man? Let me give you a different scriptural example. If you read Matthew 27, Mark 15, or Luke 23 or John 19, all of which describe the crucifixion of Christ, and do so in isolation, you'd come to this conclusion. Evil has won over good. Satan has defeated God. Darkness has now covered light and eternity is lost to a moment in time.

But we know that this is not the whole story. Read on in any of the Gospels and you discover that the suffering and death of Jesus is not the whole story, and in fact, the purpose of God and the sacrifice of Jesus His son has actually accomplished a more eternal win. Paul writes, "Oh, death, where is your sting?" Viewed from heaven's perspective, it is the complete opposite. Good has won over evil. God has defeated Satan's attack. Light shines through the darkness. Eternity lives on in the hearts of all who love God.

So in the midst of difficult days, isolated lives, loss, perhaps great suffering has taken place, but this is not the end of the story and God is not absent nor uncaring. He is at work and is very present in our time of need. He is very much bringing, learning to our experience, giving us opportunity to grow in faith and trust in developing spiritual aptitude, allowing us to live a greater life by serving others. Here's an assuring word from the pen of Paul. Romans 8:31. "What then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own son, but gave Him up for all of us. Know in all of these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

May God bless you and may He bring understanding of His will and His way in your life. Let's pray together. We thank you that our days, Lord, are not in isolation, that you are always present. Thank you that your Spirit's promises that you will not only walk with us, but go before us. You are our comfort. You are our strength. You are our peace. You are our eternal reward. And so in these days, I pray for those who are watching and listening, and for those who surround them, that you will be all these things to them. Help us to see your hand at work, give us opportunity to grow in faith and trust and service to others, and may we in this day have great encouragement from knowing that your hand is indeed upon us and in our lives. Bless those who are important to us who come to mind, who are our loved ones, and may your hand be upon the salvation army not only in Canada and Bermuda, but around the world. Be with the church. Be in the church. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.