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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Communion Sunday

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, again just thank you, I thank you for gathering us together as you have, I thank you for the goodness and the gift that you are to us. And again today we focus in on that gift of the cross. And so I pray for the grace, the wisdom, the insight and the presence of your Holy Spirit to make it of lasting value. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well as you know, this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And that Jesus on the night before he died he had this final meeting with his disciples and there for the last time he celebrated a Passover supper with them. It's described in *Matthew 26*, which says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you*

in my Father's kingdom."

So Jesus took the bread and he took the wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup so that they might symbolically do the very same thing, eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to repeat the remembrance of this sacrifice on a regular basis, and this is what we call "the Lord's table." We celebrate it once a month, others celebrate it weekly, some celebrate it bimonthly or twice a year, but we do it by meditating on what the Lord Jesus did for us on the cross and then we examine ourselves, we ask God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and then we confess our sins and participate in the elements. *John 6:53* says: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Well, we've been following the life of Christ in the gospel of Mark. And if you recall last time out we took a break from our usual journey through Mark's gospel to kind of leapfrog a little bit to Palm Sunday because last communion Sunday was Palm Sunday. So today we're going to just pick up where we were before that.

And if you remember, Jesus has just had a confrontation with the

rich young ruler who claims that from his youth he has kept all of the commandments. So Jesus tells him to sell all that he has, to give to the poor and then follow him. Well the rich man goes away sorrowful. And I asked last time, I asked the question was Jesus offering him salvation through voluntary impoverishment, and of course the answer was no. He was pointing out that any human effort to achieve God's idea of goodness is an effort that's doomed to failure.

See, the demand of a perfectly holy God is that we too must not only be holy but perfectly holy. And Jesus clearly put it in *Matthew 5:48*. He said: *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*. That's something we can't do. It's something that God had to do for us by becoming a man, by living out his own perfectly holy life so that he could take that life to the cross and exchange his perfect righteousness for our sin. And the fact is all of us, we're all under this curse that demands perfection. And the curse of the law is such that it will reveal your weakness, it will reveal your imperfection no matter who you are. Well, the disciples, they were still a very long way from understanding that. You see, they still believed that people of wealth were people who were especially blessed by God. And so what Jesus has to say to them is incredibly challenging.

So we pick up on *Mark 10:23*. It says: *And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."*

Now there's a number of myths that have sprung up surrounding what Jesus was trying to communicate here. One of them is that there's this wall in Jerusalem, there's this certain gate called "the narrow gate" that's very small and very narrow. If you want a camel to enter through it, you're going to have to strip it of all of its goods, make it get down on its knees in order to enter it. And the idea is that wealth and goods are this tremendous hindrance to obtaining heaven; they're not really a blessing. And while that may be true in many cases, that's not what Jesus was getting at at all. And in addition to that there's also the problem that historically there's no such gate as that that's ever been identified; and secondly, there's no logical reason why any merchant would subject his camel to that type of treatment when there's so many regular gates that he could just push it through.

So what did Jesus mean by that statement? Well, Jesus often uses

hyperbole in explaining spiritual principles. I mean he spoke of hypocrisy by saying don't try to point out the speck of dust in somebody else's eyes when you can't see the plank that's in yours. That's hyperbole. He also said, "*If your eye offends you, pluck it out.*" That's hyperbole as well. And the point that Jesus is trying to make here is the absolute impossibility of anyone being able to make themselves worthy of heaven by their own efforts. I mean Jesus mentioned that it was difficult for those who had great wealth to enter heaven for two reasons. Number one, it is the prevailing notion, this is what the disciples believed, this is what everybody believed, they believed that great wealth was an indication of a great blessing from God and it simply wasn't true. These persons were not on a fast track to heaven. And the other reason was the nature of wealth itself, I mean, wealth tended to make people self-reliant, it tended to make them self-assured, it also tended to make people far more interested in this life than in the next one. And people who were downtrodden, especially those who were slaves, these were folks who found very little of value in their own life, they naturally are far more inclined to look to the next. And so it's really the opposite of what the disciples thought was true. Those who were struggling in this life were more likely than the wealthy to find relief in the next one.

In fact, Jesus even told a story about that. He told a story of

Lazarus and the rich man, it was centered on that exact idea. Lazarus is a beggar, he's covered in sores, he's hoping to glean some kind of existence from the scraps that fall from the rich man's table. The rich man and Lazarus both die and the rich man goes straight to torment in Hades while Lazarus goes straight to Abraham's bosom. Well, you got to understand, all of this is a paradigm shift for the disciples. They have an extremely hard time just imagining that wealth was a hindrance because it's exactly the opposite of what they had been taught for years. Verse 26, it says: *And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."*

I just want to take a minute to look at the first part, that first part of Jesus's response. It says: *Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible."* I just want to ask you the question -- just think about this -- how did you come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior? I mean maybe you grew up in a Christian family, maybe you don't even recall the time when you didn't believe, but maybe, just maybe like my case, at some point in your adult life you found that it resonated, you found that it made sense. Well how do you think that happened? How is it that you have come to see the supreme value of the cross and of Christ who

was willing to die when your neighbors, your friends, your relatives, they fail to see any value at all? I mean, do you think somehow you might have had a deeper, more -- a better developed spirit perhaps than your friends and your neighbors? Well, I submit to you that the only way that could happen in your life whether as a child or as an adult is through some miraculous undertaking of God. And why do I say that? Well, I say that because God takes great pains to point out that ever since Adam and Eve fell, that coming to Christ on your own is an impossibility. I mean mankind has been born with this congenital spiritual condition, we call it sin. This is what Romans calls it. It says: *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man -- that of course was Adam -- and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.* And what God is saying is all of us were born in this state of rebellion.

And just listen to how God describes this state in all of us before he did that miracle work in our lives. This is his description of us before we became believers. This is *Ephesians 2:1-5*. He says: *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience -- among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were*

by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ -- by grace you have been saved.

All God is doing here is he's describing our status before we came to Christ. He says five different things about that status. He says, number one, we were dead. Not physically dead but spiritually dead in the same way that Adam died when he ate that forbidden fruit. Now does this mean that mankind is incapable of doing good? And the answer to that really is -- well, it's really yes and no. You see, mankind is quite capable of doing marvelously good things but they're all relatively good things, I mean, Jesus himself said: *The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.* So man can produce good and goodness but the problem is God's standard is not one of good, rather it's one of absolute moral perfection. I mean, I've said it many times, God doesn't mark us on a curve. He doesn't look down on us and say, well, let's see what they're capable of. Oh, He's doing particularly well given his circumstance. There's no circumstance. God because he is perfect must demand of us that very same perfection. We can't do it. And since we can't supply it, spiritually speaking,

God says you're as good as dead regardless the amount of moral excellence we pursue.

And secondly, he says we followed the course of this world. And again you've heard me say this many, many times, there are two different kingdoms in this world and they are at war. There's the kingdom of light and there's the kingdom of darkness. And before we were saved we were perfectly, perfectly happy in the kingdom that we were in and it's strictly a binary thing. You are in one kingdom or you are in the other kingdom. Like I said, we were perfectly comfortable following our own basic instincts and it was unbeknownst to us that those basic instincts, well they perfectly line up with the kingdom of darkness as opposed to the kingdom of light.

And thirdly, he said we follow the prince of the power of the air. Well, that would be Satan. Fourth, he says we carried out the desires of the body and the mind. What God is saying is we take our marching orders from our flesh, we take our marching orders from our desires rather than from God and the desires that he has for us.

And then he said, fifth, we were by nature children of wrath. I want you to just understand what God's saying is the wrath of God

he's speaking of is not our wrath towards God, it's rather God's wrath towards us. It's the settled indignation of a holy God towards a race of people who have uniformly turned their backs on him. And God's not saying that each of us individually has chosen to experience this wrath, what he's actually saying is you were born with it. He says we are by nature children of wrath. He's saying in the very same way that wolves are by nature carnivores, and then for good measure Paul adds *like the rest of mankind*. And what he's saying is that's everyone, no exceptions.

And that describes the role that we play in producing our blindness to the kingdom but we're not alone, there's not only a role for us there's a role for the enemy in this as well. *2 Corinthians 4:4* says: *The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

And so the net effect of our fallenness produces an attitude we all see whether it's polite or not so polite. And we've seen it in most of the people that we try to share the gospel with. It's this -- it's this overwhelming sense that the gospel is fundamentally foolish. *1 Corinthians* affirms that. It says: *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* And so how do dead,

blinded children of wrath who are determined to carry out their own bodily desires while thinking that the cross is absolute nonsense, how do they ever come to a place where they see it as lifesaving, as life changing? Well, I submit to you when that happens, they have clearly experienced a miracle. That's why Jesus says: *Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."*

You know, I say it over and over and I genuinely mean it we have no concept, no idea of the blessing that we have received. Coming to know Christ is no mean feat. It is a miracle. Not only have we been rescued from eternal death and condemnation, we've been chosen to rule and reign with Christ forever. Winning the lottery's got nothing on us. But you know, that blessing seems to have been completely lost on Peter. Peter doesn't get it.

Verse 28 of our text this morning, it says: *Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you."* You know, sometimes you say stupid stuff. This is got to rank up there in terms of the stupidest thing Peter has ever said -- most stupid probably. The everything that Peter has left to pursue Christ was a failing career as a fisherman, a blue collar profession that he struggled with as an outcast Jew in a Roman society, that's what Peter left to follow Jesus. Jesus on the other hand left his

position as God in heaven who along with the Father and the Spirit ruled the entire universe. I mean, Jesus was its creator. I mean you talk about leaving everything, Jesus left the glory of heaven itself where he was worshiped by all of the creatures of heaven and acknowledged as fully worthy of that worship, and he entered into a fallen world that we occupy not as a ruler of a universe but as the ruler and illegitimate child of peasants. And what was amazing is, you know, Isaiah describes it. And of course Jesus in heaven had the choice of however he would arrive on earth but Isaiah describes him as not even granting himself the advantage of an attractive body. We spoke those words this morning. I mean *Isaiah 53* says: *He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.*

So he comes from heaven itself where he's esteemed and honored by all of heaven to the one planet that has rebelled against him to live a life of absolute rejection. Again Isaiah says: *He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.* Peter tells Jesus, we've given up everything. He doesn't realize the tiniest fraction of what it cost Jesus to dwell amongst us.

But, you know, in some ways we need to give Peter a break, I mean,

he really had no idea of the enormity of the person that he was dealing with. I mean we have the scriptures, we have the scriptures ourselves that opens our eyes as to who Jesus really was but Peter didn't. And until God opened his eyes and he acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ, well Peter was really left with his own flesh to figure out who Jesus was, and he wasn't even close. In fact on one occasion Jesus began to take on some of the glory that actually belonged to him before he had given it up. Peter wound up almost losing his mind.

Peter, James, and John are with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration and suddenly a small fraction of the glory that belonged to Jesus previously begins to reassert itself in front of the disciples' own eyes. *Mark 9 says: Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.*

Well that last statement indicates two things; number one, Peter

did probably what most of us would do when confronted with the enormity of the glory of Christ and that's he literally started babbling. *And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."* For he did not know what to say. What Peter saw there in front of his eyes was so dazzling, it was so overwhelming that literally he starts speaking nonsense. The scripture says it perfectly: *"He didn't know what to say."* Some folks when confronted with something that's literally indescribable they either respond by clamming up or laughing, maybe even weeping, some respond just by babbling. You know, they engage their tongue without connecting it to their brain because their senses are overwhelmed and that was the case with Peter.

But there's another element to Peter's babbling, another element that needs to be addressed and also undergirded his attempt to make sense of something that was way beyond human sensibility. It says: *For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.* This is Jesus. He's been with Jesus for years. We don't like to think of Jesus as altogether terrifying but we do a great disservice to him when we ignore that aspect of his glory. You know, it's not for nothing that God says in *Proverbs 9: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.* Peter, James, and John, they were the disciples closest to Jesus, they've been with him for years and yet

the merest hint of the glory that Jesus actually possesses was enough to terrify them.

Much, much later, where Peter had a far more sober assessment of what it was he had actually observed on the mountain, he wrote this in *2 Peter*. He said: *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.* This is the same Peter, this is Peter many, many years later after Jesus has resurrected after he's received the Holy Spirit. I mean the Peter that we're dealing with this morning has no idea what Jesus has done for and is doing for him and he's still thinking I've given up so much for you Jesus, not realizing that the one who once sat on the throne of heaven itself now for his sake is essentially homeless.

You know, at one point Jesus was approached by a scribe. The scribe said, I will follow you anywhere. *And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."* And understand, Jesus is not

complaining here, what he's doing is he's setting the scribe right.

You know, scribes were among the wealthiest of the Jews at this point and at this point in Jesus' ministry it may well have looked to him like this a successful earthly kingdom about to take place in history, and the scribe may well have thought this is a perfect time to join Jesus as he launches his new kingdom. And Jesus is clearly disavowing him of that notion. He's essentially saying if you think you're going to get all kinds of political and social rewards by following me, think again. I'm the creator of the universe, I'm the one who gave foxes holes, I'm the one who gave the birds of the air their nests to build and all of nature the ability to care for itself. And yet while I'm here on earth as a servant, I've got nowhere even to lay my head. He's telling him, you want to join me, that's the kind of kingdom you can expect to receive for now.

Jesus experienced the most profound levels of poverty with regard to life itself and with regard to his disciples who just could not grasp the enormity of the sacrifice. And yet he's still incredibly gracious to Peter here. Verse 29: *Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses*

and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Jesus doesn't even address the enormity of the difference between Peter's sacrifice and his own. In fact he wants nothing more than to encourage Peter that even here on earth as well as in heaven the greatest decision you could ever make is to forsake all for the kingdom. He's saying both here and in heaven itself, Peter, you're going to find a hundredfold increase in houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands. Jesus meant that figuratively but he also meant it literally. See, literally every other brother -- every other believer in Christ was now Peter's brother or sister or mother or child. That's a hundredfold increase right there in the literal sense. It applied to houses as well. If you remember, Jesus instructed the disciples wherever they went to go to the house of a brother or sister. This is what he said in *Matthew 10*. He said: *Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.* So what he's saying

is wherever the disciples were going, they're going to encounter brothers or sisters who are going to say to him, "my home is your home," and we find that even today. We find that as our brothers and sisters find hospitality is a normal part of the Christian life. You know, when Pastor Papaf left India to come to the United States, he found the very same hospitality where folks opened their homes and said, "My home is your home."

As we begin to partake in the bread, we are reminded that we are just as capable as Peter of arriving at conclusions that made perfect sense to us but are really utter nonsense to the kingdom. We see through a glass darkly; God sees the whole picture. And so we are tempted like Peter to see our contribution to the kingdom as really far greater than it actually is and Christ's gifts to us as far less than they actually are.

As we take the bread, if any of you need any of it, any of the elements, just raise your hand. But now I'd like to invite Dave and Irene up for some special music beforehand.

Let me read to you God's warning to all of us about to partake in communion. This is from *1 Corinthians 11*. He says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and*

drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

And as the scripture clearly points out, communion is extremely serious business. Back then God said -- he killed some people for taking communion in the wrong way. That's how serious it is. And to enter communion in an unworthy manner is an unmitigated disaster.

So what's the requirement? Well, if you're not absolutely confident that you're a child of the King and if you haven't by faith trusted in Christ as your Savior, if you first need to be reconciled to your brother and sister as Peter said this morning, if you first need to forgive before you bring your sacrifice of yourself to this altar, then don't participate. Just pass the elements on. If you don't feel right about participating, err on the side of caution. That's how important this is. Get right with God first.

But on the other hand and I say is this as well, you can make a mistake of thinking, well, unless I'm spotless, unless I make that

spotlessly perfect status, which you never will, I'm unworthy to receive communion. And that, too, is the enemy, he loves that, that too is a mistake. Again, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you're sinless, it doesn't mean that you never fail, it means that you recognize the salvation that you've been given is a gift. As Jesus said, it's something impossible for man to get, something that God gives. And each month we repeat this quote from Dane Ortlund, it just puts it all into perspective. It says: "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do."

You know, it also means that when we fail, we need to understand, we understand that failure because we have God's Holy Spirit within us, convicting us. And so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive us and cleanse us. He says: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

So being a child of the King doesn't mean that we are sinless. It means that we sin, we recognize that we have an advocate with the Father, someone up in heaven speaking on our behalf. *1 John 2:1* says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father*

-- *Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* And that's the bottom line, what he's saying is because we have Jesus' righteousness, this alien righteousness that was given to him by him to us, he won that for us on the cross, and because we have his righteousness we are now free to eat from his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that he purchased for you. Again, he lived the life we were supposed to live and then died the death we all deserve to die in our place so that we could be right here, right now at this moment.

So take a moment before we participate in the bread to just ask God if you can truly grow in your knowledge and understanding of the depth of the gift you've been given. *1 Corinthians 11:23* says: *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

We're continuing in our scripture this morning, *Mark 10:32*. It says: *And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid.* What he's saying is this was a larger group than just the disciples. There was a bunch of people walking on the road to Jerusalem and there ahead of everyone, walking by

himself, is Jesus. He's leading them on the way to Jerusalem. He's alone with only his thoughts of what is awaiting him there. It's something that wouldn't even register with the disciples at this point, I mean, they may well have thought, well, we're on our way to Jerusalem where we're going to launch this new earthly kingdom, we're going to have a great part and great honor in this. They didn't realize that all the honor and glory, that would come but not for many, many years, not until they too had given up their lives.

So Jesus is left alone ahead of them with his thoughts. Luke said this of Jesus, he said: *When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.* And what he meant by that, he's indicating that Jesus was proceeding with steely resolve to a fate that he knew would be dreadful beyond anyone's imagination. The King of the universe was about to be stripped and beaten and flogged, mocked and crucified and only he truly understood what lay ahead.

You know, at one point he was approached by some actually sympathetic Pharisees and they warned him, they said your life is in danger. This is what he said. He said: *"Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."* Death

was awaiting Jesus and he knew it. In fact he knew it for years. He lived with that horror every single day, and now it's coming down to the wire. And even though it's coming down to the wire he knew he could not share that dread with his disciples. And again, we harken back to Peter's statement of Jesus of all that he's given up, and only Jesus knows that he's headed up to Jerusalem in order to give up his freedom, his dignity, his flesh and his blood on a cross. How empty and silly Peter's words seem. *"See, we have left everything and followed you."*

Well, Jesus uses the opportunity of his conversation with Peter to call the twelve aside and once again he calls the others out of the group, you know, they're walking in a large group, he's ahead of them, he calls the others aside, wants the disciples to separate from the group and he just has to get brutally frank about what's going to take place. And he tells them there's going to be no coronation of Jesus as king, there's going to be no great military coup, they're not going to wind up as earthly leaders of an earthly kingdom. And this is what he says. He says: *And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him.*

And after three days he will rise."

Now what Jesus didn't tell the disciples at this point is that they would all to a man abandon him, that Peter would deny him three times. Just think about the graciousness of Christ. He's at the worst possible moment in his entire life, he set his face like flint towards Jerusalem, he's marching towards his torture and death, his disciples are completely clueless.

Actually we'll see next time that things go from bad to worse. They're not only clueless but the disciples start vying again for what they think are going to be the premiere positions in the new kingdom. They start arguing among themselves, they start trying to pull fast ones on each other. In spite of that Jesus has nothing but love for his disciples. God himself said it best in *Romans 5:7*. It says: *For one will scarcely die for a righteous person -- though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die -- but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* You see, by definition we are not good persons. We are sinners saved by grace.

As you take the cup, ask God to help you realize the privilege that you have been given. *1 Corinthians 11:25* says: *In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new*

covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." So take, and drink.

Again, this is the part that we call heart, hands and feet where we try to come up with some kind of practical way to understand what it means to remember Jesus. And again, I'm going to sound like a broken record here but what I want us to do is just to continually consider the privilege that we have. I mean, you look out those doors, walk around, next time you're at Wal-Mart just look around at all of the people that are just wandering, how many of them have a clue about the kingdom of God, how many of them have the understanding that you have of who you are, what Christ has gone through to purchase what you have, what you're looking forward to.

And while you're considering that, consider the responsibility that we have. I mean can you just picture yourself up there at the judgment seat and somebody's being condemned to outer darkness forever, they turn around as they're walking past you and they said, "You knew? You knew, why didn't you tell me?" Our time in Revelation has given us a sense of what is coming and it's not going to be good; it's awful. Judgment is awaiting this world. And even now all of us, we have a sense that this world is now gripped in a darkness like we've never ever seen before.

So I just want to repeat my challenge. I want each of us right now to call to mind a friend, a relative, a neighbor, a colleague, just someone and I in particular want us to pray and I want us to pray because that's the only -- I just spent the whole message saying how impossible it is for people to come to Christ on their own. And Jesus said with God all things are possible, but that gets unlocked through prayer. And so I want us to focus on an individual this morning and I just want to pray and I want to ask us, I want to ask God for opportunity -- for three things, I want to ask for opportunity, for courage and for the ability for us to deliver his message with mercy.

So I pray. Father, as we're all thinking perhaps of a friend, perhaps of a colleague, maybe a spouse, a neighbor, somebody, Lord, we are here given this incredible privilege and it's all bottled up inside us. And Lord, we just long for the opportunity to be able to share it with somebody. And Lord, perhaps you have people in mind for us to share it with. And so I pray this morning that you would first give us wisdom; secondly, that you would give us courage and that you enable us to give the gospel as we understand it and that can be as simple as saying I was lost, and in Jesus I've been found; he died for me. It doesn't have to be some kind of Ph.D. dissertation. You share what God has given to you and what you know and you share it with mercy. And I pray that you

would give us all that ability and that opportunity. And I pray
this in Jesus' name. Amen.