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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Communion Sunday - He Who is Not With Me is Against Me

Mark 9:38-41

Prayer: *Father, we just want to thank you again for this day, once again another day that we can focus on you, on the cross and what you've done for us on the cross and we just praise you and thank you for that opportunity. We don't know how many more we'll have but we enjoy and appreciate this one as well. So Father, this morning as we open up your word, I pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, I pray that you would guide us, direct us, give us the ability to make this of permanent value, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as you probably know this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And that Jesus on the night before he died he met with his disciples and there for the last time celebrated a Passover supper with them which is described in *Matthew 26*. It 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 bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood, then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically 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 and we do that by meditating on what it is Christ did for us on the cross, by examining ourselves and that means asking God's Holy Spirit to point out areas where he's convicting us of sin, by confessing our sins, and then by participating in the elements. Jesus said in *John 6:53*: *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're following the gospel of Mark in the life of Christ and we've seen Jesus encounter many different forms of demonic opposition, from sickness to disease, from the jealousy of the Pharisees to the indifference of many who followed him simply for the free food and the miracles. For three years now Jesus has been instructing his disciples and preaching the gospel announcing that the kingdom of God has arrived. And that kingdom was going to be

won, it was going to be lost outside of Jerusalem where Jesus would offer up his life on a cross. And so now his public ministry is winding to an end and Jesus is giving a far more intense instruction to his disciples. And so the last time we looked at this spiritual dullness that Jesus repeatedly encountered among his disciples. And it was particularized by the fact that they failed to cast a demon from a young boy. And so he is encountering their seeming lack of understanding just about what the kingdom consisted of along with their refusal to acknowledge Jesus' repeated claims that he was going to die and after three days rise from the dead. And then there was this way they constantly argued among themselves about who would be greatest.

So here's Jesus at the end of his three-year ministry having poured himself into the disciples, encountering in them a selfishness and self-centeredness that could easily put a lesser being so far off that he would utterly reject these ignorant, ambitious posers, but that's not who Jesus is. So Jesus addresses this particular issue by taking a young child and putting them in their midst -- putting him in their midst. Verse 36 says: *And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."* Well seems like Jesus always had children around him. In this case he

takes a little one, he puts his arms around him then he kind of hoists him up and holding him in his arms and while holding him he says, *"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me."*

So why a child, I asked last time. I said, well, for one, a child is absolutely powerless, I mean he can do absolutely nothing on his own to secure his future. He or she has to trust his parents, so too an unbeliever can do nothing on his own. He lacks the ability and the will to become worthy of God on his own and he has no choice but to trust in his heavenly Father, that he has provided a means for him to establish his righteousness, his worthiness before God and that's exactly what the cross was designed to provide.

Well now the second thing about a child is also the way that they believe. Jesus says humbly, that is without pretense. That's without any other baggage other than simple childlike belief. Children come by that naturally. It's we adults who have to work at it. Sometimes we have to fight and claw and scratch in order to come back to childlike faith, but childlike faith is exactly what's required. Again, Jesus says, *"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me."* Jesus is speaking right to the heart of his disciples and whether or not their hearts were pierced, there still remains many, many questions because the apostle John then makes a statement that can be interpreted a number of ways. The next

verse, he says: *"Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us."* John's picking up on the idea of doing anything in the name of Jesus and so he describes an incident that had happened some time recently when the disciples came upon someone exorcising a demon apparently successfully, unlike their recent attempt. This man was exorcising demons in the name of Jesus Christ and because he's not one of their circle, well, they demand that he stop. And so John repeats to Jesus what took place and he's asking him whether or not he did the right thing. I mean this may well be the first recorded incident of a style conflict between believers. I mean think about it, the church has not even yet been born and there's already signs that churches are going to have struggles between each other.

You know, a few months back I went to a mini conference in which pastors in all local areas of the church were asked to attend. The man who was running the meeting, he started off with a general question of all of us and he said how many Bible believing churches are there in the tri-state area? How many do you think? And folks gave varied answers. I think the low was four or five and the high was fourteen, depended on what area they saw as the tri-state area. And after he heard our answers, he shook his head, he said, actually the correct answer is one. There's one church in the

tri-state area. As he pointed out there may be certain numbers of individuals from this church and maybe twenty from that church and three from that church and fifty from that church, there's all different kinds of people who make up the actual church but who are actually in many different bodies in the tri-state area. Fact is there is one church in the tri-state area, and the conference is all about trying to conquer the notion that the church is this individualistic little body that meets in an individual little place. It's not.

And if you read the book of Revelation you see the first part is devoted to seven letters to seven churches. This is *Revelation 1:4*. It says: *John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne.* Then in verse 10 he says: *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."*

Now you have to understand these were churches who were under persecution. They were barely existing some fifty years after Christ's death and his resurrection. There's no such thing as the

first church of Ephesus with some big white fancy building or a megachurch known as the Smyrna Community Church because the idea of church never even existed. I mean the church was made up of local groups of people who communicated as best as they could via letter and via oral traditions being shared as they moved among each other. From the very start of our church we've recognized that we are by far not the only game in town and that there comes great strength in unity with other churches even if you don't agree with all of the finer details.

Now most conservative Christians believe that there are three different levels of involvement concerning the differences among believers. They are what are considered to be first, second and third order degrees of differences and there's significant differences within those differences. Well, first order differences are so serious that folks who espouse these views are not considered to be Christians. These are doctrinal positions as to whether or not Jesus was actually God, whether he truly rose from the dead. Folks like Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons who deny that Jesus was God or other groups that may deny that he rose from the grave, they're not considered to be fellow Christians. That's a first order difference.

Well, second order differences, they're still serious but they

don't constitute Christian, non-Christian distinctives. They are differences that cause denominations to form. And you know, I hear folks talk all the time about what a disgrace the Protestant faith is because there's 45,000 different denominations and it's proof that Christians can never see eye to eye. I for one appreciate the fact that there's a great deal of variety among secondary issues and that folks have the freedom to express themselves according to whatever they feel God has called them to. I mean people are in different denominations based on how they view things like the way baptisms are conducted or how communion is presented or how each group views the idea of sacraments. I have dear brothers and sisters in Christ who believe passionately in a charismatic expression of worship. These are folks who cannot imagine worship without speaking in tongues. I can't imagine worship with tongues. And I greatly appreciate these brothers but I also appreciate the fact that we both can worship with believers of like mind while appreciating others who see things differently.

I don't think there's one pastor in my particular prayer group who sees things exactly the way I do and that's perfectly okay with me. I know for a fact that all of them love Jesus Christ and they all want to serve him and grow his kingdom and that's what matters most to me. Personally I'm happy to wait until we get to heaven for them all to learn that I was right and they were wrong.

We may joke about it but you know, one thing we take seriously is the unity that surrounds knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Now this third order of difference would be about minor things.

It's like what Bible translation you think is the best or whether you think Jesus is going to come for his church before the millennium, during the millennium, after the millennium or there is no millennium. These differences are such that you should be able to acknowledge them and still have close Christian fellowship.

Well that notion was completely foreign to the disciples and they can certainly be forgiven for having no idea how to treat an outsider who is doing something for the kingdom, I mean something important for the kingdom like casting out demons, but something done by someone who is just not in their circle.

So the first thing we have to acknowledge is that this appears to be a highly legitimate exorcism done by somebody through the power of Christ. Again we go back to *Mark 9:38: John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us."* Well this believer is not just trying to cast out a demon, he was actually succeeding. That alone differs greatly from other accounts we read in the scripture of other false exorcisms, notably the one attempted by the seven sons of Sceva. That's famous or infamous.

It's found in -- the account is found in Acts 19. It says this, it says: *And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.*

I mean these seven Jewish exorcists, they came into that room fully clothed, fully confident that they had the magic formula and some magic names that would give them power over these demons. They had no idea what they were about to encounter. It's one demon possessed man against seven phony exorcists and in the end all seven of them flee the house stripped naked, bleeding and wounded. The demons certainly recognize Jesus because they knew he was Lord, and they had clearly heard about Paul and all the damage that Paul

was doing to Satan's kingdom but these seven imposters had no standing whatsoever. And I can't imagine how they heard those words, *"Jesus I know and Paul I recognize, but who are you?"* I mean the fact that the exorcists that the disciples' encountered was successful, that goes a long way towards suggesting he was a legitimate member of the kingdom. And what Jesus said next made that a certainty. This is verse 39: *But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me."* What he says, if you've done a mighty work in God's name you'll find it very hard to be against God. And understand, to do something in Jesus' name is to do it as if you were Jesus, that is with his heart, with his soul, with his mind and in his strength. Now for many that mighty work is not something that we have necessarily done but it is something that Christ has done in us, that is he has opened up our ears so we could hear and he's opened our eyes so that we could see. This is what Jesus said about different flocks. He said: *I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.*

Jesus is speaking of the Gentiles, these are the sheep that are not

of Jesus's fold. Guess what, folks, that's us. I mean none of us were of the fold that Jesus called. We were the outsiders. And when he called us there was no uncertainty whatsoever about our response. He says, *"They will listen to my voice so there will be one flock, one shepherd."* The fact that you are sitting here when you could be a thousand other places, the fact that my words don't sound like utter nonsense to you is not a credit to me, it's not a credit to you, it's a credit to the great Shepherd who has called us. I mean I've said it before, I'll say it again, you and I have no idea of the privilege that we've been given. Because the vast majority of people who come under the hearing of his voice, they are spiritually deaf. And the vast majority of people who see only a Jesus they can dismiss, they're spiritually blind as well, they have no idea because the good Shepherd has not yet called them. Jesus has sheep in every single fold of every tribe under every nation on earth and every single one that he calls will respond to his voice. So take a moment this morning to consider what a gift you have been given as we prepare to receive the elements.

1 Corinthians 11:28 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 you all know the drill, I say this every month, I speak about how serious communion is, and to enter into communion in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster. I plead with you all, if you're not absolutely confident you're a child of the King, if you haven't by faith trusted in Christ as your Savior or if you first need to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you bring the sacrifice of yourself to the altar, then pass the elements on. If you don't feel right about participating, then err on the side of caution and get right with God first.

I also say on the other hand you can make the mistake of thinking you have to be perfect, which you don't. Being a child of the King doesn't mean you don't sin, it doesn't mean you don't fail, it means that you recognize the salvation you've been given is a gift that no one is capable of earning by being good. And so we quote Dane Ortlund who 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."

We also understand that when we fail we are aware of the fact that we've sinned because God's spirit is now within us convicting us.

And so we grieve and we grieve as children who understand that we have a Father longing to forgive us, longing to cleanse us, a Father who 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 understand that when we sin we have an advocate, which simply means somebody is 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 why, I mean, because we have Jesus's righteousness and not our own 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. As we say each month, he lived the life we were supposed to live and he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so that we could be worthy for this very moment to come before his table.

Have you ever asked yourself why, why me, Lord? Why did this mercy extend to me? God has an answer. I don't know that it satisfies but it's an answer. This is *Romans 9:15: For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."* So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. Just take a moment to reflect on the mercy that you have received as you open up your communion

packet. If anyone needs one of these, please just raise your hand.

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." So take, and eat.

Well the disciples, they want Jesus to weigh in on this very first person they encounter worshiping Jesus in a way different than they're used to. Again verse 39: *But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us."* Jesus is telling them, hey, this guy's on our side. You see, in Jesus's economy there is no such thing as neutrality.

You know, most people think there's this vast ocean of humanity that feels quite comfortable not being against Jesus but certainly not being for him as well. Jesus addresses both ends of that neutrality issue and he spoke about that, other end in *Matthew 12:30*, he says: *Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.* So Jesus says if you're not against me you're for me; if you're not for me you're against me. And what he's done there is removed the one excuse that keeps the

vast majority of people from coming to Christ. You see, people divide saints and sinners within our Christian culture in ways that Jesus refuses to accept. Most people automatically assume they're in category one. They're not really against Jesus, I mean, I got nothing against Jesus, so technically they must be for him. I'm referring to people that we refer to as nominal Christians, that are folks who are Christian in name only. These are the vast majority of those who would check the box "Christian" if there was some kind of survey but actually have no concrete connection to Christ and his kingdom. And they may at one point gone to church or CCD classes as a child or maybe they've been confirmed, maybe they believe because they're a citizen of what's considered a Christian nation that somehow or other by virtue of birth, by virtue of nationality they are Christian. Technically they're not against Christ, so therefore they must be for him. But Jesus is not identifying attitudes here. Here he's identifying actions. And the first action he's speaking of is a man actively praying out a demon in Jesus's name. That's clearly somebody who's for Christ. But in that second statement that Jesus makes, he hits a comment that keys it in specifically to actions instead of attitude. This is what he says, he says: *"Whoever is not with me is against me"* -- okay, that's attitude -- *"but whoever does not gather with me scatters."* See, you can get away with claiming an attitude that's not against Jesus per se, but you certainly can't apply that

to the action part of the second part of the statement: *"Whoever does not gather with me scatters."* See, simply being for Jesus and not against him falls far short of what it means to be a believer in Jesus Christ. And even the most popular scripture in the entire Bible makes it plain when it's understood in context that there's no such thing as neutrality when it comes to the kingdom of God.

We all know the most popular verse in scripture is *John 3:16*: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."* Okay. So far, so good thinks the average nominal Christian. God loves me enough to die for me. But then God goes on to say something that's probably shocking to the vast ocean of people who think they're doing just fine simply because they're not against Jesus. They don't realize that not believing fully in Jesus, not accepting him as Lord and Savior of your life puts you on the other side of a great divide that separates every single person on this planet into either of two camps: Those whose lives have been given over to Christ and his kingdom and those whose lives have been given over to the other kingdom and its prince, Satan himself. People would balk at that characterization because they still think you can be essentially neutral when the spiritual battlefield is stark and

strictly binary, that is, there are only two options: One kingdom or the other. You are either a child of God or you stand, as God says, condemned already.

Listen to what he says in the very next verse. He says: *"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."* See, an essential part of proclaiming the good news of the gospel is proclaiming the bad news of the state and status of everyone who is outside of the kingdom of God. Like I said, there's no such thing as neutrality. God's not saying those who reject me specifically are condemned. Instead he says all those who do not fully believe that Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior stand condemned already. Those are two vastly different states of being. Most people assume incorrectly that unless you flat out reject Jesus as Lord you've got to be in this vast ocean of people who are essentially neutral. You're not against Jesus in that you don't rail at him, you don't curse him out but you're certainly not for Jesus because he's not a vital part of your life. God says if that is your conviction, you don't need to wonder where you stand because you stand condemned already. That may be shocking and disturbing to hear right now today, but trust me, it's going to be far more shocking and far more disturbing to hear when you're standing before God on judgment day.

If you look at Ephesians 2, you see God giving a sober assessment of just where every one of us stood in that exact same position before we came to Christ and it doesn't resemble neutrality in any way, shape, manner or form. This is what God said speaking of believers and where we were. He said: *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.* God says you may have thought that you were neutral but you weren't; you were actually dead. You were dead in sin, blindly following the world, in league with the prince of the power of the air. God's telling many of us something we didn't know. See, we all thought we were neutral but God says you were living in the passions of your flesh carrying out the desires of your body and mind, all the while acting according to your nature, as a child not of God but wrath itself. And all the while you're probably think that you and God, you're not on the best of terms but you're not on the worst. The bad news is it doesn't get much worse than condemned already. And folks have it in their mind that actively and openly rejecting God is not a good thing but they seldom don't consider what Jesus was saying when he said: *"Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not*

gather with me scatters." God says if you're not actively with God as Lord and Savior then you're already openly rejecting him. If you're not actively about the business of gathering the lost into the kingdom, then you're actually among those who are scattering them.

Folks think the gospel claim is if you reject God you will be doomed, and that's not the gospel at all. The gospel is you are already doomed from the start and the gospel is your only hope. You can find this out now or you can find this out at judgment day. And trust me, one is far better than the other. One has hope abounding; the other one has nothing but the finality of hopeless condemnation, and it represents the status of the vast majority of the people that we know. There's a reason why Jesus says in *Matthew 7: "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."* Jesus is telling us there's a four-lane highway nicely paved and highly traveled that goes straight to hell. And here's the part that almost no one, Christian and non-Christian alike, believes, that is that the vast majority of humankind is already on that highway, *"and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."* These are not

my words; these are Jesus's words. I mean there's a reason why we evangelicals are evangelical, which by the way comes from the Greek word "euangelion" which means gospel or good news. The good news makes no sense whatsoever in the absence of the bad news. And the bad news is that every one of us sons and daughters of Adam are already doomed unless we come to Christ. We are born in what's called "original sin." This is an inherited imperfection from Adam's fall that renders all of us unfit for fellowship with a perfect God. Jesus is God loving us enough to become one of us and then live out a perfect human life and then offer that life as a substitute for our sins so that we by faith can claim his perfection as ours and then stand before God now fitted for heaven. God's the one who's done the heavy lifting here. He's the one who died to give us the privilege of fellowship with him. He's the one also put us strategically within the enemy's kingdom with a job to do. I mean it's our task to share the good news of the gospel in ways large and small.

If you go back to the beginning of this conversation we realize Jesus started it out by acknowledging one of the big ways. Someone was literally booting a demon out of another person by the power of Jesus Christ. And Jesus says: *"Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us."* But

then, then Jesus swings over to the very smallest of efforts, pointing out that nothing we do for the kingdom is going to escape his notice. This is what he says next. He says: *"For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward."* So for hand-to-hand combat with demons to giving a fellow laborer a cup of water, they all matter when it comes to advancing the kingdom.

As we take of the cup, let's ask God to open up in you a spirit of amazement for what he's done for you and a renewed commitment to advance his kingdom as he works through you. *In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."* So take and drink.

This is the part we call hands, head, hands and feet, where we are looking for a practical application for how it is we remember Christ and his cross. Thinking of Jesus, he used another occasion of demon possession to point out what our attitudes should be towards sharing the gospel with our friends, our neighbors, our colleagues, our relatives, all of whom are doomed without it.

Jesus had just cast a demon out, he was accused of being able to do so by the power of Satan himself. This is what he said, he said:

"And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house."

What we have to understand is this planet is the strong man's house. This is where he lives, this is where he rules. Shortly before he went to the cross Jesus even acknowledged his rulership. This is what he said in *John 14*. He said: *"I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me."* Jesus was the only one who the ruler of this world had no claim on because he was the only one who's ever been perfect. But here's the fact, the enemy has a legitimate claim on virtually everyone else. We have the privilege of participating in the rescue of others from that claim. Every time you share the gospel with someone you are literally raiding enemy territory. And should you have the privilege of sharing the gospel and someone accepts it and comes fully into the kingdom, then you know from that moment forward you have bound up the strong man and plundered his house. There's no greater feeling than that, ever.

I still remember the very first time that I shared the gospel with

somebody who fully gave their life to Christ. I remember thinking if I live the rest of my life as a skid row bum, it doesn't matter, I'm still -- my life is worthwhile. It's the most worthwhile thing I've ever done in my life. It was an incredible gift and privilege. So our attitude should be one of absolute amazement that God has given us ears to hear and eyes to see, but along with that amazement, an intense desire to see the very people he puts in our pathway get that opportunity as well. So once again, I'm going to ask that you just conjure up in your mind a friend, a relative, a neighbor, a colleague, somebody that God has strategically put you on this planet for, and we're going to just take a moment and pray for them.

Father, I just again, I pray for each of the individuals that you are hearing coming before your throne, each of the people that you are hearing being brought forth who don't know you, Lord, who desperately need to know you. I pray for each person bringing that prayer, I pray that you would give them the privilege of the opportunity of sharing the good news, of being able to go into the house, bind up the strong man and plunder that house. I pray for that opportunity and I pray for that grace, I pray for that wisdom as well, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.