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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**December 4, 2022**

**Communion Sunday**

**Mark 10:1-9**

**Prayer:** *Father, again I thank you for gathering us together as you have. I thank you for your goodness and for your mercy. I thank you for what communion represents. Lord, I just thank you for the price you paid in order to rescue us. And this morning, Lord, again as we're looking into your word to concentrate on what you've done during that rescue, I pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, that you would guide us, direct us, accompany us, and that you would make these words of permanent value. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, this is the day that we remember Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, as we know he met with his disciples for one final 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 bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood, then he asked the disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup so that they might symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. He then asked them to repeat the remembrance of his sacrifice on a regular basis and that's what we call "the Lord's table." We celebrate it once a month and we do so by meditating on what the Lord Jesus 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 sin and then by participating 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're following the life of Christ in the gospel of Mark and at this point his public ministry is winding to an end and Jesus has been giving this intense instruction to his disciples kind of in a private way and they've been actually fighting and bickering among themselves. The end of chapter 9 marks the end of this private time that Jesus had instructing his disciples and Jesus now finds himself on the road with his disciples; and once again, he's surrounded by crowds and once again he's involved in a controversy

with the Pharisees.

Our text starts at *Mark 10:1-9*. It says: *And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them. And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."*

Well we know by now the Pharisees were out for blood when it came to Jesus and we knew that they were following his every move just hoping to find a way to trip him up, hoping to find a way to diminish his appeal which they knew had come at their expense. And so time and time they confronted Jesus and time and time again Jesus made them look foolish. And the question they brought up, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife," well on the surface that was a legitimate question. Peer beneath the surface and

you'll find that it was anything but. But Jesus knew exactly what the Pharisees were after, so he pressed them on that question saying, "What did Moses command you?" Well, their answer was as phony as the question was. They said Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away. Well the Pharisees gave Jesus that answer knowing full well that that's not actually what Moses said. You see for years now Jews had been divided over what Moses meant when he made his statement on divorce.

Baker's New Testament commentary does a good job of explaining what this division was all about. It said: "Among the Jews there was a difference of opinion as to what Moses had taught with respect to the problem of divorce. He had written, 'When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found 'erwath dabhar in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce.' (Deu 24:1). But what is meant by 'erwath dabhar? Does it mean "a scandalous thing"? Other guesses are "some indecency," "something improper," "improper behavior," "something offensive," "a shameful thing" (LXX), etc. According to Shammai and his followers the reference was to unchastity or adultery.'"

See, Shammai represented the conservative view. Now there were liberals there as well, the liberals were followers of a rabbi called Hillel and he had interpreted Moses in the exact opposite

way. According to Hillel Moses had actually given the Jews permission to divorce their wives for any reason whatsoever, including burning a dinner or talking loud enough so that the neighbors could overhear. Those were actually legitimate grounds for divorce according to Hillel so long as the husband gave her a written bill of divorce.

So you can see the question was carefully designed to put Jesus into a no-win situation. If he sided with the conservatives and Shammai, he would have alienated all of the Hillel supporters who were actually in the majority. If he sided with the liberals and Hillel, well he would have alienated the Shammai conservatives and their followers. I can just picture the Pharisees noddingly approving to themselves that they'd finally gotten Jesus now on the horns of a dilemma, but they had no idea who they were speaking with. They had no idea that this itinerant preacher that they thought of as a no-account nobody was actually holding the earth in its orbit as he spoke to them. He was responsible for the electrical signals that were causing their heart to beat and the very air that was going in and out of their lungs. For all of their vaulted knowledge, they had no clue that they were talking to the creator and sustainer of the universe, now clad in human flesh. And that he had come down to lay down his life on a cross so that we could by faith claim his righteousness as our own and stand

before God healed of the sin that separated us from him.

Now I find it an astounding portrayal of Jesus' humility that he even cares to address these issues on a peer-to-peer basis when the only actual peers that Jesus had was God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. And his human peers, they were not friendly inquisitors looking for information, these were bitter enemies who were looking for a way to destroy Jesus. And yet he engages them in their dialogue with a three-fold response to the question that they raised. Jesus reacts, he resists, and he responds. And in so doing, he gives us a template as it were for how we are to respond as we follow in his footsteps.

So first of all Jesus reacts. If you notice, he doesn't answer their question directly but rather he goes back to the source of the issue. He's not looking for their interpretive input, he's looking for a basic principle that all of their questions arise from. They mention the first place starting with what Moses actually meant when he issued the command, hence the question: "What did Moses command you?" And when they give Jesus their interpretive and incorrect answer, Jesus goes right back to the principle that underlined Moses's statement: *And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment."*

See, they thought they were merely citing a legal precedent, and Jesus goes beyond the precedent to the fallenness and hardness of heart that produced it. I mean the commandment Jesus explains was a concession, it was based on weakness, it was based on sin, it was aimed at providing relief and release for the women involved. You see, a certificate of divorce at least gave the woman the right to remarry in a culture that made the life of a single woman of no value whatsoever. But even that concession was being reinterpreted as a license to divorce for any reason whatsoever. And the question that the Pharisees were raising was designed to place Jesus on one side of a technical issue or the other. And so Jesus refuses to take the bait. He goes right to the heart of the matter in discussing God's design of creation right from the beginning. Jesus says: *But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'* Jesus reacts, and he reacts with a simple statement of truth and he reacts to a hostile set of questions delivered by religious people who don't want the truth; they only want to see Jesus look bad.

Well, not much has changed in the last 2,000 years. Today we find ourselves having to answer hostile questions delivered by people who don't really want the truth but who only want to see biblical Christianity look bad. Case in point. A few weeks back there was a terrible shooting at a gay night club in Colorado. A mentally

deranged person went into the night club and just starting shooting and when he was finished five people were dead, 19 were injured. Well many of the cultural elites decided just where the blame for that needed to be affixed and it was captured well in a *Washington Examiner* op-ed by Madeline Fry Schultz. Her article was entitled, "In Colorado, Leftists Look For Any Excuse to Criticize Christians," and this is what she said. She said: "Pluralism is dead, and if you want evidence, just talk to the Left following any national tragedy. On Saturday, Nov. 19, a deranged shooter entered Club Q, a gay and lesbian nightclub in Colorado Springs, and killed five innocent people, injuring 19 others. A horrific incident such as this should be an opportunity for both political parties to come together in support of a grieving community. But, of course, one side had to point fingers immediately. The day following the shooting, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez tweeted that it had taken place 'after an anti-LGBT+ campaign.' Vice ran an article about how 'the point' of the Right's opposition to radical gender and sexuality policies was to cause mass shootings. All this with zero interest in determining the actual motives of the alleged killer, who is, it turns out, nonbinary. And if you think that politicians such as Cortez and her media allies are simply pinning blame on Westboro Baptists types who gleefully proclaim that all homosexuals go to hell, you haven't been paying attention. All it takes to get slapped with the 'hateful bigot'

label now is a traditional Christian view of sexuality. That's why, following the Left's knee-jerk blaming of the GOP and Christians for the attack, a Christian group was vandalized. On Thanksgiving, someone spray-painted the words, 'Their blood is on your hands. Five lives taken,' on the sign of the Focus on the Family headquarters in Colorado Springs. While the organization holds traditional sexual ethics, it notes on its website that it is 'committed to encouraging its friends and constituents to reach out to gay people with compassion.'"

Welcome to today's Pharisees trying to make Christianity look bad. And so we go back to our original premise here, how do we respond? Well, our first order of business should be learning how to react to circumstances like this in the same way that Jesus did. See, he was approached by hostile people wanting nothing but bad intent, who posed to him a series of questions designed not for information but to trip him up. And so we as biblical Christians are being daily approached by hostile people with nothing but bad intent posing a series of circumstances designed not to paint a picture of reality but instead to paint anyone who believes in biblical sexuality as a hateful bigot. If you have any doubts, I'd like you to consider this public message given by a mainline protestant preacher speaking of the blood that conservative Christians now have on their hands.

Pastor Bob Lerien of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, condemned people of the cloth who have been silent on this tragedy. "It's time to be very clear about something. All of you Evangelical and fundamentalist clergy who claim to be pastors and shepherds of God's flock" -- that would be me -- "who step into your pulpits and preach hate and bigotry and transphobia and homophobia, you are blasphemers and you are false prophets," Lerien started. "If you are proclaiming anything but the acceptance and love of God's beautiful and beloved LGBTQIA+ children, you are blaspheming against the image of God in which they were created, and you will be judged for the blood on your hands because you are enabling the hate that kills God's beautiful children." The pastor continued, "For all you Evangelical and fundamentalist lay people who fill the pews and offering plates in those churches" -- that would be you -- "you have blood on your hands because your offerings are financing the hate. Your offerings are paying to stoke the fires that lead to people committing these despicable acts of violence against the innocent."

Well, the pastor then rails against his fellow liberal clergymen who have not condemned us biblical bigots enough. He says: "And for all my fellow mainline protestant progressive Christian clergy and especially bishops and other judicatory executives who are not speaking out - how dare you. If you are not condemning homophobia

and transphobia explicitly from your pulpit, then you are enabling it implicitly in the streets. If you are not condemning it, you are complicit in it. Your silence is violence and the time for neutrality is long over, so suit up and speak up or sit down and shut up."

Okay. How do we react? Well, we need to understand how Jesus would react. First thing we need to understand is what Jesus did not do. He did not sit by passively and hope that the hostility of the questions would simply go away. He reacted but he reacted in a way absolutely consistent with who he was and what he was there for. We've come to the place where Peter's advice is now an absolute necessity. This is what Peter said, he said: *Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.*

Pastor Lerien just stated that silence is violence and that's about the only thing that I can agree with him on. See, folks are saying that refusing to engage in this debate regardless from what side you are coming from is in fact a statement itself. They're saying in essence if you're not willing to actively and outwardly condemn anyone who takes the biblical position, then you are in fact siding with them against the LGBTQ community. So in effect they have

successfully forced our hand because our silence is now viewed at the very least as acquiescence or fear.

Jesus reacted to the Pharisees' questions and his reactions were clearly to resist the inferences that they were trying to make. They wanted to insist that the scripture could be reinterpreted to make divorce simply a matter of convenience. They wanted to find a way to trip Jesus into taking one side or another, and Jesus refused and he refused by going back to first principles. You see, instead of getting bogged down in the minutia of divorce laws Jesus went to God's original design because he knew that's precisely where the enemy was attacking. We need to do that as well.

All of the media that we see confronting us today about transgender and non-binary issues are in fact an attack on God at its most basic level and that is on his design for human beings. This is not something peripheral by any means. This is a direct attack on God and it needs to be viewed that way. We need to do just what Jesus did when he responded to the Pharisees. He went back to God's original design. And right then and right there he planted a stake that to this day remains absolutely unmovable and that is he stated that all the creation is in fact binary. That means two and only two choices for all of mankind, you are either male or you are female, period, end of statement.

Jesus put it this way in *Mark 10:6*: *But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'* Now because of the fallenness of creation there's always going to be some poor souls who fall into the category of the brokenness of fallen creation. There are genuinely hermaphroditic people who are born physically stuck between both sexes, and my heart goes out to those folks but they are a microscopically tiny minority, a people nowhere near the level of gender dysphoria that has broken out like a plague in these last few years. Part of the reason for that plague has been the absolute silence about it that has come from the Christian community. You know it's been said, "All that's required for evil to prosper is for good men to do nothing." So let me state very clearly that gender confusion is not cool, it's not hip, it's not compassionate, it is sin. It's outright rebellion. It's telling God that you reject the design that he has for his creatures. And for some reason we are afraid to go anywhere near that. We remain silent. And in that silence those who delight in shaking their fist at God have gained the upper hand. Christians and the at-large community of simply sane people as well have responded to accusations of bigotry and hatred with cowardly silence and that silence has emboldened the wicked.

So this morning as we begin to prepare to take the bread, we need to ask ourselves if we've been guilty of the very same silence. 1

*Corinthians 11 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 I share each month, I basically, I plead with you, I tell you communion is an extremely serious undertaking and to enter into it in an unworthy manner as to court disaster. I plead with you if you're not absolutely confident that you are one of his, that you're a child of God, a child of the King, if you have not by faith trusted in Christ as your savior, if you first need to be reconciled with your brother or your sister before you bring the sacrifice of yourself to the altar, then do not participate in these elements; just pass them on. If you don't feel right about participating, err on the side of caution. Get right with God first.

I would say also on the other hand you can make the mistake of thinking you have to be flawlessly perfect in order to participate, and that's a mistake as well. Being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin, it means that you never -- doesn't mean

that you never fail, it means as we say each month that you recognize salvation as a gift that no one is ever capable of earning by -- quote -- "being good." So I quote Dane Ortlund each month because he so succinctly put it by saying: "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."

So we also have to remember that when we fail, the reason why we're aware of our failure is because God's spirit is within us. It's God's spirit inside us that is convicting us. So we grieve as children who understand that we've got a Father in heaven who speaks on our behalf. God says, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

We also understand that when we sin we have an advocate in heaven itself with the Father, someone speaking on our behalf. *1 John* tells us: *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 point, I mean, because we understand we have Jesus' own righteousness within us, not our own, because we have that

righteousness, we are free to eat from his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that he purchased for you. He lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so that we could be made worthy of this moment. So ask yourself, do I love him? And let me ask us, are you willing to forego the safety of silence? Take a moment to consider that.

*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.*

I have a sad question to raise and the question is this: Have you ever known a time of more cultural depravity than these times? You know, just this past week the Senate voted to pass a bill called "The Respect for Marriage Bill" which is anything but. This is a bill that codifies gay marriage and specifically repudiates the defense of marriage bill which was passed overwhelmingly in 1996, stating that marriage was between a man and a woman. In 1996 that bill passed the senate by a vote of 86 to 14. The respect for marriage bill which again repudiates the Christian idea of marriage, passed this week -- this week by a vote of 61 to 36 with

all democrats in favor and 12 Republicans joining them in shaking our fist at God.

So how did we get here? Well, I've said it over and over, if you want to look at the root cause of the circumstances that got us here, look no further than *Romans 1:18-32* because it's there where God lays out precisely why we as a culture are going off a cliff, and it might not be from what you think it is. Therein God identifies our great sin, a sin that our culture is guilty of, the great sin that has caused him to practically abandon us. It's not homosexuality, it's not gender issues; it's something far more basic. It's a refusal to acknowledge the truth of who God is and what he has proclaimed in his word.

Let me give it to you the way God puts it. This is *Romans 1:18*. It says: *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their*

*foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

It's all about the very same creation that Jesus is talking about. And you know today almost every time you hear words like "evolution" or "Darwinism" or "natural selection" or even "mother nature" you hear them trotted out as the reason why the biological world is the way it is, understand that we as a culture are literally engaging in suppressing the truth of God in unrighteousness.

Evolution has become our new national religion, and there's a reason why. And the reason why is because naturalistic macro evolution appeals to our culture because it enables us to remove God completely from his own creation and substitute random chance and enormous periods of time in its place. God didn't create our world; time and random chance did. And God tells us exactly how this sits with him. Verse 21: *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him.*

See, we as a people prefer to embrace nothing as God rather than the God of all creation. Creation is now a term reserved for scientifically backward people who still believe in fairy tales. Evolution has taken us from that primordial soup all the way to

homo sapiens by mindless random occurrences, and if you don't believe that you're just ignorant. Even the tiniest of evidences are given as proof. I mean is there microevolution that takes place within each individual species? Of course there is. I mean, just look at a dog. Your typical dog has within its gene pool the ability to produce a Chihuahua or a Mastiff. I mean, there's a whole lot of reason for adaptation and change and difference. We call that natural selection because that's exactly what it is, it's an ecological niche which selects which creatures within its species are best adapted to live within that niche. But that's not macroevolution where one species evolves into another species. Macroevolution demands fish become reptiles, reptiles becomes birds, birds become mammals, mammals become people. It eventuates in our evolving from protein soup through to human beings. And it all occurs through mindless random happenings. God, they insist, has nothing to do with this because in their view God himself doesn't exist. But God says there's a price you're going to pay when you as a culture believe in that. In verse 24, it says: *Therefore -- and that's what the therefore is directed at -- Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.* God says you buy into that wholesale, I'll give you up. If you want to know why there's been a veritable explosion of pornography and the dishonoring of our bodies amongst ourselves, look no further than

this effect that God declares that happens when a culture decides it's not going to repent of its rebellion.

God then says there's a second layer of abandonment in store for a culture that refuses to turn. In verse 25, he says: *Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. God says for this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. In other words the LGBTQ++ has its origin not in the fight for human freedom but in the flat out rebellion that exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped the creature rather than creator. When a culture fully embraces that second level and gives no evidence whatsoever of repentance, God then moves on to the third level of abandonment which, I'm sad to say, we are clearly in right now. God says: *And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.**

Three times, each time growing successfully deeper and more

depraved God says he gives us up when we suppress the truth about who he is and what he has done. And the final abandonment is in a debased mind, a debased mind that does what ought not to be done. Folks, we're looking in the deepest level of that phase, phase three right now, and we're living out what a debased mind looks like. How many times have you looked at a newscast or a newspaper or read an article or simply heard from something, somebody or someone else of people doing and saying things that on the surface appear depraved and insane? And the vast majority of the American people, they just shrug their shoulders.

Biological men now compete as women on women's athletic teams. Men's room on college campuses are now required to carry feminine hygiene products because men now have periods. A billion dollar fashion company just put out an advertising spread that featured a four- and five-year-old girl holding a teddy bear dressed in full-out sadomasochistic bondage costumes. I mean, our assistant secretary for health in the whole country is a man who has now declared that he's a woman. A senior official at our department of energy is a man who's declared himself non-binary and he's posing in full makeup and a dress as if that's completely and totally normal and acceptable. It is not. It is debased, it is depraved. It's literally shaking our fist in God's face and daring him to do something about it, not realizing he already has. *And since they*

*did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.*

I mean there's only one explanation for the insanity that has gripped our culture and that's we've been given up to that very mindset. That's the world that we live in right here and right now and it doesn't give any indication that it's going to change in the short run. And so it's our task to learn how we are to live in this world as it is in a God-glorifying, God-honoring manner and that includes learning how to live in this culture. And that includes our scripture this morning. Again, we need to go back to Jesus as our model.

When being confronted by these hostile folks, when being confronted by the hostility to the good news of the gospel, Jesus first reacted. He knew he was being set up, yet he didn't take the bait but he also didn't avoid the question. He reacted to their question about divorce with a question of his own. He said, *"What did Moses command you?"* I mean we need to react rather than to simply stay silent.

And secondly, Jesus resisted. You know, the Pharisees, they were confident they had an airtight loophole for easy divorce provided for them by the patriarch Moses. Jesus popped that bubble right off the bat by saying, *"Because of your hardness of heart he wrote*

*you this commandment.*" You see, Jesus refused to stay silent and he resisted their attempts to normalize what was sinful which is exactly what's happening today. And you know, sometimes silence is called for, sometimes it's not. It was Abraham Lincoln who wisely said, "Tis better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt." Sometimes silence itself is taken as acquiescence or surrender. And when the gospel or the cause of Christ and his kingdom is coming under direct attack, our silence can put us in the place where we appear to be agreeing with those attacks.

And finally we have our third category which is responding. How do we respond to this? Well, did you notice what Jesus did in his response to the Pharisees? First he reacted. Secondly he resisted, but thirdly he responded and how he responded is critically important for us to see. He responded by going directly back to scripture. In fact he went back to the very beginning in Genesis 1:27. *Mark 10* says: "*But from the beginning of creation -- this is Jesus' words to the Pharisees -- but from the beginning of creation 'God made them male and female. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.'* So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Now if you look at my quotes, the ESV, the reason Jesus' response has these little quotation marks around it because he was directly quoting scripture. So here we find Jesus at the very end of his public ministry doing exactly what he did at the very beginning. If you remember, Jesus' public ministry started with a confrontation between him and Satan in the desert. And after fasting for forty days and forty nights Jesus took on Satan directly in a series of challenges between both kingdoms. And Jesus was first tested in his self-sufficiency. After forty days and nights he's clearly hungry, so Satan goes right after that hunger, saying -- quote -- *"If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."* And secondly Jesus is tested in his presumption of God, Satan challenged Jesus by saying -- quote -- *"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"* And thirdly Jesus was tested in his willingness to forsake all including any shortcuts which would preclude the cross. Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth and all of their glory in space and time: *And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."*

Understand what's taking place here. This is flat out war between

two kingdoms. This was a battle and it was a battle that Jesus absolutely triumphed in but note how Jesus elected to respond to the devil. Three times the devil approached him with a temptation; three times Jesus responded with the same statement. He said three little words: *"It is written."* After the first test Jesus said *Matthew 4:4: "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"* After the second test he said: *"Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* And after the third test scripture says: *Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"*

Jesus didn't fight the devil with his wisdom or his strength or his power, although for him any of those would have been sufficient. Instead he fought him the way he wants us to fight him. He fought him with the very same weapon that we have, he fought him with the word of God. *1 Thessalonians 2* says: *And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.*

Now we're probably not going to be facing trick questions from the

Pharisees about Moses and divorce, but it's certainly possible we're going to be facing them about LGBTQ issues and this transgender insanity that has gripped us. Our answer needs to be exactly the same as Jesus. On the issue of multiple genders Jesus said: *But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'* On the issue of gay marriage Jesus said: *"'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."*

So like Jesus we need to react, we need to resist, we need to respond and we certainly do not need to stay silent. We simply need to point out what God makes clear in his word because it's the only power that's going to prevail in this culture, a culture that has turned its back on God.

As we take the cup, ask God for the courage to refuse to stay silent and the wisdom to trust in God's word. *1 Corinthians 11* 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."*

This is the part that we call head, heart, and feet where we try to

grab ahold of some kind of practical application of what it means to focus in on Jesus and the cross. I want to open up this part by just making a statement. I just want to say if you in any way, shape, manner or form are struggling with same-sex attraction, I want you to know that it is part of the brokenness of the fallenness of man and that every single person in this room, including myself, is broken in one way or another. If that's the way your brokenness is expressed, I want you to know that you can confess your sin knowing that God is faithful and just to forgive us and so are we. I want you to know that if you struggle with same-sex attraction, you're not the first one in this place to struggle with it. And if you're looking for someone to walk with you and pray with you and uphold you in that struggle, we are here for you. And if you fall down, we'll help you pick yourself up by the grace of God.

However, if you see same-sex attraction as a gift or a blessing or something that you are simply born with, I don't know that we have the ability to help you until you see it as something that by the power of Christ you can conquer. So if this is your struggle, I would ask you please don't hesitate to call me. We will respect you, empower you and walk alongside you.

For the rest of us, practically speaking, we need to be prepared to

give an account for the hope that's within us. We need to replace our silence with biblical wisdom. There's a whole bunch of ways that we can do that now and one of the ways that I recommend is podcasts. You know, Al Mohler has an excellent podcast called "The Briefing." It's just that, it's a daily briefing on a biblical way to understand and approach the news of the day. Alisa Childers has an outstanding podcast defending the faith from de constructors. There are dozens more that you can listen to. I listen to a whole bunch of them. Another way obviously is books, I mean, we have a whole library of excellent books downstairs. And there are dozens more of ways that we can listen to and take in those things that are good because we literally have garbage pouring into our lives every single day from every form of media, and we need to push back against that in any small way that we can. Another way is small groups. We need to join one, we need to start more so we can strengthen each other through fellowship. And finally and most important of all is what we need to do right now, we need to pray. So let's do is that.

*Father, I just acknowledge that we are -- I don't see where we can get much worse, although I've said that many, many times and found that we are able to discover new bottoms of new barrels. And so it's with fear and trepidation that I say that we are at the bottom. I just continue to pray, Lord, for us to have the ability*

*that you had, for us to have the ability to see that the source of our strength, the source of our wisdom is not us, it's not our cleverness, it's not our ability to argue, it's your word and your grace and your power and your Holy Spirit. So I pray that you would empower each and every one of us, give us the ability to refuse to remain silent, to be able to react, to resist and to respond as you see fit, not as we see fit. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*