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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Communion Sunday - Peter's Blindness and Ours

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, we just again, we thank you for this day, we thank you for this time that we can focus on you and the cross and what you've done for us there. I pray, Lord, as we open up your word, as we participate in the elements, that your Spirit would guide us, that you'd accompany us, that you'd give us the insight and the grace that we need and to make this of permanent value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as been said this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died he met with his disciples there for the last time he celebrated a Passover supper and 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 blood and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup so that they might 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." And so we celebrate it once a month by meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus did for us on the cross, by examining ourselves and that means asking God's Holy Spirit to point out areas in which he is convicting us of sin, by confessing those sins 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 are following the life of Christ, we're in the gospel of Mark. If you remember last time we looked at two different miracles of Jesus, there was the very private one and a very public one. The public one was the feeding of the four thousand with seven loaves and a few fish. Seven loaves became seven hundred then it became thousands and four thousand ate their fill and were satisfied and then Jesus gets into a boat with his disciples and he leaves the area. But the story doesn't end there. We pick up at *Mark 8:14*. It says: *Now the disciples had forgotten to take*

bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

Now the disciples had seven large baskets of fragments that they had collected from the feeding of the four thousand and they wound up leaving all of them behind. In fact they only brought with them one loaf of bread. I can't say for certain but it sounds like Jesus is just overhearing the disciples discuss this while they're in the boat and he simply makes a general statement about leaven and bread. This is what Jesus said. He said: *Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.*" And the disciples once again, they leap to a wrong conclusion. Verse 16 says: *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have no bread"* when in fact Jesus wasn't talking about bread at all. Rather he was talking about leaven and leaven is always about influence, whether good or bad. In the past Jesus had referred to leaven as a good thing. He stated this in *Matthew 13*, he said: *"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."* Here Jesus is emphasizing the fact that leaven is self-replicating, that even a tiny amount of leaven hidden in three large measures of flour, it's going to work itself throughout all of the dough. That's how the leaven of the kingdom works. I mean, it started with Jesus and his

twelve disciples and over the last two thousand years, it's been self-replicating. It's been working its way through the entire world and everywhere it goes, its influence has been for good. We pointed out, just look at the places in the world where the gospel's either been removed or where it has not yet arrived and you see disease and death and oppression and brutality. Compare those to the places where the gospel's been established and you see that the leaven of God's kingdom has been nothing but good. Jesus knew that leaven was influence and that the influence of the Pharisees and Herod in particular was particularly dangerous because it worked from within just like leaven, it permeated, it transformed, it changed. Jesus was warning them that not all evil, particularly the evil that he was referring to comes from outside, from out there. This is a type of evil that was not like abortion or gender fluidity or porn or something that you can put your finger on and say, "There it is." It was an evil that transforms like leaven transforms, something that permeates the victims so thoroughly that they no longer have the ability to see what they are becoming. Leaven of the Pharisees works in such a way that the more it pervades your being, well the less aware of it you are. And Jesus's teaching style is now suddenly starting to change to address these particular threats. The disciples don't realize it but Jesus knows that the public aspect of his ministry is coming to a close. He no longer knows, I mean he knows that the crowds are

starting to diminish, the cross is starting to loom and so he begins shutting down the public aspect of his ministry to devote his time to teaching them all that he wanted them to know and to understand before he would leave this earth.

This morning we're going to be looking at another one of Jesus's miracles and yet another private meeting that he has, this time again with his disciples, and this is *Mark 8:22-26*. It says: *And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking." Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. And he sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."*

Well like I said, so many of Jesus's miracles had been done in very public venues like the feeding of the four thousand. They were designed to illustrate his supernatural powers and abilities but even he acknowledged that they had a very limited effect. I mean for those whom God was drawing, the miracles confirmed what the Holy Spirit was doing, but those who were determined to reject the

Messiah, all the miracles did was increase their appetite for bigger ones, for grander miracles. That time is coming to a close now. But there's still a need that's being presented to him, I mean, a man is blind and people are begging for a healing. But note what Jesus does here, I mean, he takes the man by the hand and he leads him out of the village so that he can minister to him directly, uniquely and privately. Jesus perfectly meets the needs of those that he ministers to and in this case, just like all the others, it differs from every other case. And what Jesus did with this man physically he does symbolically with everyone who loves him as Lord and Savior. You see, Jesus physically removed the man's blindness in the same way that he spiritually removes our blindness as well. And just like with this blind man, our blindness gets removed not instantaneously but sometimes in stages. And we'll see Peter struggling mightily with his blindness in understanding Jesus's point and purpose in coming to earth. I mean, Jesus is beginning now to bear down on his disciples and he's telling them exactly what is going to happen in the future. And we're going to see that Peter wants no part of that whatsoever. You see spiritually Peter sees the truth but he sees it as trees walking. Jesus's love of Peter never diminishes but his willingness to rebuke his willful ignorance reminds us that we, too, often act willfully blind about the truth God wants us to see. And so if you love the Lord, the first thing you need to realize is

that you, too, have been the recipient of a miracle as great if not greater than the miracle that this blind man received. And we're going to see that this morning in the private meeting that Jesus has next with his disciples, but for now as you prepare to receive the bread, I want you to realize that as lovers of Jesus every last one of us has received a miracle with regard to our own blindness. Listen to what Jesus said in *Matthew 13:16*. He said: "*But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.*" So take a moment this morning to reflect on what the leaven of the gospel has done for your eyes and for your ears as we prepare.

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.*

Just to repeat the warning I give each time about communion being an extremely serious undertaking, that to enter into communion in an unworthy manner, as I've often said, is literally to court disaster. I say if you're not absolutely confident that you're a child of the King, if you haven't been faith trusted in Christ as

your Savior, if you first need to be reconciled to your brother and sister before you bring the sacrifice of yourself here to the altar, then don't participate, just 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 often say on the other hand you can make the mistake of thinking, okay, I have to be spotlessly perfect or else I'm unworthy to receive communion, and that, too, is a mistake that the devil loves. I pointed out that 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 received is a gift from God that no one is capable of earning by simply being good. I repeat Dane Ortlund's quote each month because it's so worth repeating. He 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." Well it also means that when we do fail, we are aware that we've sinned. Why? Because we have God's Spirit inside us. It's God's Spirit that convicts us and so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive us. God says in *1 John 1:9*: *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're without sin, it means that when we sin we understand we have

somebody in heaven speaking on our behalf, we have an advocate. As *1 John* 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.* See it's because we have Jesus's righteousness, this alien righteousness that belonged to him and is given to us, it's not ours, it's now ours to own by faith, 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 Jesus purchased for you. You know, we say he lived the life that we were supposed to live then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so we could be made worthy of this moment, worthy to eat at his table. So thank God this morning for the gift of his leaven working its way through the loaf healing our blindness.

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.

So Jesus has done a mighty miracle in healing a man's blindness, but he does it in a very private way insisting that the man not even enter the village to tell those other folks about his miracle.

Why? Well because this time is now reserved for Jesus' instruction to his disciples about his imminent crucifixion and resurrection. In fact Jesus is shutting down the public part of his ministry. We pick up on *Mark 8:27*. It says: *And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.*

Now at first blush this question seems to me, it seems almost inappropriate, I mean, *"Who do people say that I am"* sounds like someone almost fishing for compliments or someone who's not quite sure where they stand, looking for some kind of encouragement.

Well in Jesus' case nothing could be further from the truth. And Luke gives us another important detail of what took place here. He says, Luke tells us that Jesus had been praying to his Father just prior to asking this question. You see, it seems that now is the time, this whole conversation was designed to formally state what had only been hinted at before.

Luke's gospel points out that Jesus first asked the disciples what it was the crowds were thinking. *Luke 9:18* says it this way, it

says: *Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"* Well *"some said John the Baptist"* which is a response that made sense, I mean Herod had executed John, people were surmising that Jesus's power might have come from the fact he was John the Baptist risen from the dead. *"And some said Elijah,"* which also made sense because there was a precursor message in the book of Malachi about Elijah saying this, this is *Malachi 4:5-6: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."* And still others saw Jesus as just a great prophet. What Jesus was after though was not what other people thought of him. What he really was after here is what the disciples thought of him. In verse 29 he says: *And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?"* Jesus is pretty much saying it doesn't much matter what everybody else thinks, what matters is what you think. For us Christians that's an incredibly important part of how we live out our lives. See, you're not going to have anybody in this world around you nod their head in approval when you state who Jesus truly is. I mean I'm sure you've noticed that you can speak the name of Christ with no problem whatsoever in our culture provided you speak it with absolute disrespect. I mean saying things like, "Oh Christ" or

"for Christ's sake," that doesn't raise an eyebrow. You can speak the words "Jesus Christ" and you can speak them loudly or softly, humorously or bitterly and nobody's going to make a fuss. Just put the word "Lord" before those two words, which is exactly who he is and say "Lord Jesus Christ," and you'll instantly get a reaction. "Lord Jesus Christ" is something the world reacts to on a gut level, kind of like shining a flashlight into a sleeping person's eyes, you know, it's startling, it's unpleasant, it shakes them out of a deep sleep that every non-believer in this world seems to enjoy.

"Who do you say that I am" is a question that every single person who walks this earth will one day have to answer. For some it will be too late, it will be after the fact of their death. God says *at the name of Jesus every knee will bow*; some willingly, others not so much, but all of us will face the question that Christ asked of Peter and it wasn't only Peter that he asked it of. I mean, when Jesus said, *"Who do you say that I am,"* it's popular to think that he just kind of isolated Peter to ask him that question, but he didn't. He was using the second person plural pronoun you, meaning he was addressing the entire group and it was Peter as the leader of the group who gave the response that represented the whole group. And so Peter says, *"You are the Christ."* Well again as we've so frequently seen, Mark's gospel gives us only this tiny

little bare bones answer. So we have to fill in some more details by looking at some other accounts, by looking at Luke's and Matthew's account of this incident and there we find the words are essentially identical but there's more background information given in Matthew's account, not just of what Peter said but of what Christ said in response and this is the way Matthew describes it. It says: *Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."*

Now do you remember the miracle that I spoke of about all of us who love Jesus receiving? Well Jesus in his response refers to that miracle that all of us received when he says, *"Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven."* I mean there's no doubt that flesh and blood, that is your fellow human beings in some way gave you the truth of the gospel, I mean, you either read it in a book or a pamphlet or Bible that somebody gave you, somebody was responsible for printing or someone spoke to you the truth of the gospel in person or through some other medium. So flesh and blood, well it delivered the message. But as Jesus said to Peter, *"Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven."* See the fact is flesh and blood is incapable of revealing this truth. As I said last week 1

*Corinthians 1:18: For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. And there's a reason why the cross is folly to those who are perishing. You see, as a result of the fall every human being that is born is born in a state of active rebellion against his Creator. And the biggest problem he has is he doesn't even know it. He's completely unaware of it. In fact most folks when told of their spiritual condition, they resent that information intensely. They basically don't believe it. I mean I've told many a person that their net problem with God is that they hate him and they don't even know it. Folks, they're shocked that you would make an accusation like that. I mean they can't believe that someone would accuse them of hating God when they genuinely believe they harbor no malevolence whatsoever towards any deity whatsoever. But when you begin to tell them who this God really is, that he demands absolute worship, that you are required to love your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, all of your mind and all of your strength, and if you violate that law in any way, shape, manner or form, you are guilty before that holy God, that's when folks start to have a problem with this particular God. Who does he think he is? That's why 1 Corinthians 2 says: *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.* See, Peter had the truth delivered*

to him supernaturally. As spokesman for the group, he says, "*You are the Christ, the son of the living God.*" Peter's the first one to formally announce his salvation according to *Romans 10:9* which we often quote, which says: *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Well you know, some folks get half of this right, they get the confession part right, they think if you can get somebody to publicly confess Jesus is Lord, well then, there you go, he's saved. I once heard a man say you can go down to a homeless shelter with a pile of \$20 bills and offer them to anyone who would be willing to publicly confess Jesus is Lord, and chances are you'll get a lot of takers. But simply announcing the words "Jesus is Lord" is not nearly enough. In fact just about anybody can do that. It's the second part of that verse that truly counts, which says, "*If you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved.*"

So that raises the question, okay, what does it mean to believe in God? I mean what does it mean to have that belief firmly rooted in your heart? Well, I heard an excellent answer recently from a man who's gained a certain amount of fame of late. He's a professor of psychology, or at least he was, in a Canadian university. He

became famous for refusing to use the new pronouns that are supposed to ensure that genders aren't identified as either male or female. He became very famous and infamous at the same time. Of course there's lots of people who love him and lots of people who hate him. His name is Jordan Peterson. And what was of interest to me was that this was a man who clearly had a great deal of courage and a great deal of wisdom. He was quite willing to meet with those people who opposed him on their home turf and to argue, I think very persuasively, that he didn't feel obligated to use gender neutral pronouns. And so I've been following him for actually a couple of years, and it turns out this is a man who, even though he lectures extensively on the Bible, struck me as a -- and I still believe he's a non-believer but someone who is struggling to try to come to grips with what Christianity is actually claiming and in particular on the claims that if it was true, it would have on your life.

And so I came across a video in which he was discussing a question that somebody had asked him. And he started out by saying how he resented the question itself. And the question was: "Do you believe in God?" I found his answer as to why he resented that question absolutely fascinating and incredibly challenging when taken from the perspective of a non-believer reflecting on what it means to answer Christ's question when he said, "*Who do you say*

that I am." Here's my slightly edited version. I just watched this video and wrote down what he said. This is my slightly edited version of Peterson's answer to the question, "Do you believe in God." This is what he said:

He said: Who would have the audacity to claim that they believed in God? If they examined the way they live, who would dare say that? To believe in a Christian sense, to have the audacity to claim that means that you live it out fully and that's an unbearable task in some sense. To be able to accept the structure of existence, the suffering that goes along with it and the disappointment and the betrayal and to none the less act properly, to aim at the good with all of your heart, to dispense with the malevolence and the desire for destruction and revenge and all of that and to face things courageously and to tell the truth, to speak the truth and act it out, that's what it means to believe, that's what it means. It doesn't mean to state it. It means to act it out.

Just as an aside, one of the things we Christians are often accused of is being very good at stating what it means and very bad at acting it out. This is what he's pointing out.

He goes on to say: Unless you act it out, you should be very

careful about claiming it. So I've never been comfortable saying anything other than I try to act as if God exists because God only knows what you'd be if you truly believed. If you think about it in some sense that's the central idea in Christianity. It is said if you were capable of believing, it would be a transfiguring event, a truly transfiguring event. And I know people experience that to one degree or another, but we have no idea what the limit of that is. So we have no idea what the possibility is within each person if they lived a life that was maximally courageous and maximally truthful. Because maybe you're running at sixty percent or seventy percent or twenty percent and at cross-purposes to yourself. God only knows what you'd be like if you believed; and so I act, I try to act like I believe but I've never claimed that I managed it.

I mean this is a man who by his own admission is not yet fully in the kingdom of Christ. I mean he doesn't know for certain if Christ is real and yet he says he acts as if he believes in God even though he doesn't know for sure because he wouldn't have the gall to claim otherwise without actually living a transformed life. I mean it seems to me that he understands better than most just what it is that Peter meant when he said to Jesus, "*You are the Christ, the son of the living God,*" because the implications of that statement is exactly what Jordan Peterson is wrestling with.

I mean if we truly believe that God himself has entered into flesh and lived the life we believe that he did and then called each of us to spend the rest of our lives being shaped and molded into the very image of that life so that we could uniquely bear his image and his cross, then how can anybody become a believer in Christ and not have it radically transform everything about the way that we live our lives? That's the part that I think mystifies Jordan Peterson as an outsider. I mean how can anybody make the claim that God himself became a man and offered up his life to transform us and then agreed to indwell us, to empower us to live radically different lives without living a radically different life? I mean Peter had confessed with his mouth and he clearly believed in his heart, but Peter, being Peter, still had a long way to go and that's a huge encouragement for all of us.

You see our lives and our sanctification play themselves out on what is called a saw tooth curve. I don't know if you've ever seen a saw tooth curve. It goes like this, like the teeth of a saw. You know, it's always pointing in a forward upward direction but there's always going to be lots of pauses and lots of misdirection and even some places where it looks like it's going backwards. Peter goes from the highest of heights then he goes almost instantly backwards because he just couldn't fathom the depths that Jesus would go to in order to rescue his sheep. This is what Mark

says in verse 31. It says: *And he -- that's Jesus -- began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.*

Understand, Peter absolutely knew that Jesus was the Christ. What he didn't know, what the Christ intended to do in coming to earth. I mean, he still thought of Christ as the Messiah who was going to free Israel from the oppressive rule of Rome. Remember, this is the guy who took out a sword, cut off the ear of a soldier in the garden of Gethsemane. He still had a great deal to learn about the difference in being free from the oppression of Rome and being free from the oppression of sin and evil. So all Peter could think about was his own personal loss and his grieving at the death of his own personal vision of what the Messiah would be to him.

And Peter wasn't alone in having these earthbound fleshy thoughts about the power and glory that would belong to him. I mean, we know the disciples had the very same thoughts. You see, we have three very different enemies here: We have the world, the flesh, and the devil. And we don't even need the devil to tempt us when the world and the flesh will do it for us. I mean how do I know the disciples had such worldly thoughts? Well, the scripture parts

the curtains on those thoughts, all of which happened after Jesus's confrontation with Peter, weeks later. In fact weeks later scripture tells us in *Luke 22*, it says: *A dispute also arose among them -- that's to the disciples -- as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.* And Mark's gospel gives us even more details. It says: *And they came to Capernaum. And when he -- that's Jesus -- was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.*

Matthew's gospel tells us of yet another instance where James and John actually had their mother shilling for political power for them with Jesus. This is *Matthew 20:20*. It says: *Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."* Now that was a blatant power grab that reflected their thinking that they were going to be some kind of powerful earthly rulers. Not only did their mother think she could carve out a role for them, she also thought she could outfox the others and grab that leadership position for her sons before the others had a chance to even realize what was going on. That's pretty darn earthly for a spiritual leader to think. And believe me, the rest

of the disciples knew it was. Verse 24 says: *And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers.*

Now mind you, all of these events took place after Jesus has his confrontation with Peter. You see, over and over again Jesus is forced to reiterate what he was there for and why that looming cross was so necessary, because the disciples had fixed their eyes not on God's kingdom but on the earth. This instance with Peter was the first of many and as Jesus begins instructing his disciples about his imminent death, Peter starts rebuking Christ. Now scripture doesn't give us the detail, it simply tells us in verse 32, it says: *And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."* Jesus didn't rebuke Peter because he got his facts wrong. He rebuked him because his mind was set on earthly things. You see, Peter no doubt at long last, he had these thoughts of power and glory and honor for his Lord, and for me too, and here's Jesus telling him -- quote -- *"that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again."* And he said this plainly.

How many times have you and I gotten into our heads how we think

things are supposed to go, how we think they have to go if God really, really does love me? If you love me, Lord, this is what you're going to do. And how many times have those plans been dashed as being not at all of the kingdom but rooted firmly and grounded on this earth? I mean some of the greatest answers to prayers that I've ever had has been God saying to me a firm and fast "no" to something that I thought, just like Peter, was good and honorable and wise and which time showed to be anything but that. See, the bottom line in all of this is whether or not we are willing to trust in God and his plan for us when God's primary evidence, God's bona fides for us have a cross. That's my down payment. That's what God is saying. Here's my proof that I love you. Are you going to trust me?

I started talking at the beginning of this message about leaven as influence and how evil leaven, the evil leaven of Herod and the Pharisees can turn a person upside down without them even realizing what was happening. Well there's also a good leaven. And the good leaven of the Holy Spirit and the sanctification process that he's bringing every one of us through and it's designed to turn us right side up. Just like the blind man had his blindness removed in stages, so, too, we have our blindness removed oftentimes in stages as well. Sometimes it takes an outsider like Jordan Peterson to wonder why it is that people who believed that Christ radically

transforms lives don't have lives that indicate that kind of transformation has ever taken place. Perhaps it's because we see the hypocrisy and the power grabs and the lies in our lives just like Peter and the disciples saw them, we see them not with clarity, we see them like trees walking until God repeatedly shows us our blindness. Communion is a time for us to ask for, to plead for a spirit willing to see all that God wants to reveal to us about the blind spots in our journey. And so we pray the same prayer that David prayed: *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.* We pray, Lord, give us the eyes to see and the ears to hear those things we don't want to see and don't want to hear. Give us the ability to not just state our beliefs but to act on them as well.

You know, normally I do our head, heart and feet part, that's the practical aspect of communion where we look to practical ways to remember Jesus after the cup. I want to do it beforehand this morning, and I want to do it beforehand so that the love passage from 1 Corinthians can guide us as we examine ourselves for our blind spots. You all know what the love passage is from 1 Corinthians. Anybody whose ever been to a wedding has heard it.

Let me just read it to you, *1 Corinthians 13* says: *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is*

not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

So what I'd like us to do this morning is to take a moment to ask ourselves before God's Holy Spirit the questions that this raises. Have I been patient? Have I been kind? Have I envied? Boasted? Am I proud? Am I a mocker? Self-seeking? Easily angered? Do I keep a record of wrongdoings? Do I hate evil? Do I rejoice in the truth? Do I always protect, always trust, always hope, always persevere? Do I fail? Of course we do. Thank God, *if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.* Lord, I just ask that you would give us the grace not to just state what our belief in God is but to act it out as well. So take a moment. I'm going to repeat these. Just ask God to show you areas in your life, in my life, where he's pointing out blind spots we've refused to see. Have I been patient? Have I been kind? Have I envied? Boasted? Am I proud? Am I a mocker? Self-seeking? Easily angered? Do I keep a record of wrongdoing? Do I hate evil? Have I rejoiced in the truth? Do I always protect, always trust, always hope and persevere? Lord, speak to us in these moments, I pray.

If you would take your cups, prepare. 1 Corinthians 11:25 says:
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.

Lord, I thank you for men like Jordan Peterson. I pray that he comes fully into your kingdom. I don't think he's there just yet. I pray that he would fully, completely enter your kingdom. I thank you for the perspective that he gives us as someone outside looking in and just wondering why he doesn't see more transformed lives. I pray, Lord, that you would give us this opportunity this morning that we would recognize that you are a God who loves us regardless, that all of us have this saw tooth curve that we're on with checks, backwards movements and forward movements. Part and parcel of our growing in you, Lord, is the ability to recognize those blind spots that we have in our lives. And so I pray that you would give us the ability to see them, to understand them, to take them in, and to resolve to move on from them. And I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.