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Jesus and Doubting Thomas

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, I just thank you, it's because of you, it's because of the cross that it is not death to die. We are so thankful for the gift of eternal life that you've purchased for us at the cross. And this day, Lord, we set aside to think of what it is you've done for us there on the cross, and so we pray for an extra measure of your grace, that you would guide us as we open up your book, as we again reflect on that cross. And we pray for your Holy Spirit's presence, that you would be giving us the ability to understand at greater depth what it is you've done for us and that it's of permanent value, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, like we said it's the first Sunday of the month and this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. We start out by remembering the night that Jesus celebrated for the last time a passover supper, it's recorded 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."

Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup so that they might symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to repeat this remembrance of his sacrifice on a regular basis. This is what we refer to as the Lord's table. And we celebrate it once a month, and we do that by meditating on what Christ has done for us on the cross, then by examining ourselves, asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sins, by taking the time to confess 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."*

Now we've been working our way through the Gospel of John and we're at the very end, so we're spending some time there. We're actually looking at some of the confrontations that Jesus had with his disciples post resurrection. We looked first at Jesus's confrontation a few weeks back with Mary Magdalene. This was the confrontation that he had at the tomb and he tells her, *"Do not cling to me."* He challenges Mary to widen and broaden the scope of

just what it meant to be a child of the kingdom of God. See, Mary's relationship with Jesus was earthbound. It was very limited. She was stuck in a place where she saw Jesus clearly as Lord but not nearly so clearly as Savior. And Jesus was trying to get her to look at a much bigger picture than she had been willing to look at. In a sense, Jesus was her prince charming, he was now trying to get her to see that he was her Lord and Savior. And he had just told her that now the debt of her sin had been fully paid and now, so to speak, her adoption papers had been finalized. She and the rest of the disciples and every subsequent believer going backwards to Adam and forward to the very last believer had their adoptions finalized. What Jesus was saying is we're no longer just friends, now we're actually adopted brothers and sisters of Christ. And because of our new status as part of the family of God, we are now co-heirs with Christ. And Jesus put it this way, he said this to Mary: *"Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"* We pointed out that if we and Jesus both have the same father, then that has to make us brothers and sisters to Christ. And Hebrews makes that point, it says in *Hebrews 2:11: For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers.*

So we looked at Mary and then next we looked at Jesus's response to Peter post resurrection. And we saw that not for one moment during his passion, during his crucifixion and even after his resurrection had Jesus ceased from taking that bad news about Peter's denial and somehow turning it around into good news for Peter. We saw that Jesus's goal in all of this was really the care and the protection of those that he had come to die for. We spoke of this breakfast that Jesus cooked for the disciples and the three times that he asks Peter if he loves him. Three times Jesus disciplined and affirmed Peter at the same time, saying, "*feed my lambs,*" "*tend my sheep,*" and "*feed my sheep.*" And as painful as it was, Peter needed desperately a confession, a repentance, and a restoration that took place publicly before the rest of the disciples in the presence of the Lord. And for the rest of his life, Peter would reflect the grace that he had received from his Lord. You know, that impulse-driven, that ego-driven braggart that Peter was, that Peter was being put to death and there was a new Peter, one that was resurrected along with his Savior who was being shaped and molded by the very same Savior, and he was being molded for the task of shepherding the sheep. Again we saw *Romans 8:28* at work, it says: *God causes all things to work together for good.* I mean, he's determined to use even our sin and our folly to shape and mold us into the image of his son Jesus Christ. And not for one moment during his passion, during his crucifixion and even after his

resurrection had Jesus ceased from taking that bad news of Peter's denial and making it good news for the rest of Peter's life.

And so we've looked at two and this morning I want to look at a third post-resurrection meeting and this time it's between Jesus and Thomas. It's that famous interaction that forever left Thomas with the nickname "Doubting Thomas." We're going to look at that but first we want to look at a little bit of history of Thomas to see that Thomas really had a problem with doubt and depression all along. And so we go back to the first instance that we see of Thomas recorded in the gospel of John. It's a short while before the cross, Lazarus has died, Jesus is waiting for all of this to happen, and he tells the disciples he's going to go visit Judea. We pick up the story at *John 11*. It says: *Then after is this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." Then his disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought he was speaking about taking rest and*

sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him." Then Thomas who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Well, this is the first statement made by Thomas in the gospel of John and you can see as we look at these statements that in every one of these cases Thomas never hesitates to see things in the worst possible light. I mean in this particular instance, Thomas has doubts about Jesus' resolve. In the very next instance we'll see that Thomas has doubts about Jesus' resourcefulness. And in the final instance, the far more serious one, we'll look at Thomas's doubts about Jesus's resurrection. Thomas doubted Jesus with regard to his resolve, his resourcefulness, and his resurrection.

So first we're going to look at this doubt that Thomas had about Jesus's resolve. You see, as far as Thomas is concerned, this going to Judea, this is a suicide mission. Jesus is hated there. They even tried to stone him. Thomas rightfully understands that Jesus is not going to be persuaded into not going. He wrongfully misunderstands why Jesus is resolved to go. Jesus in fact is planning his greatest miracle. Lazarus is going to be raised from the dead. It's a testimony to Thomas's loyalty to Jesus that even though he thinks Jesus' resolve here is fruitless, it's suicidal,

he's still willing to go. *"Let us also go that we may die with him,"* he says.

Now this second statement that Thomas makes, unfortunately it's easily as glum and depressing as the first. In this case Thomas appears to doubt Jesus' resourcefulness. Once again we see what's going on. Jesus is in the process of preparing his disciples for the cross and he's teaching them all of these lessons about what is going to be coming and some of it is jarring, some of it is very disturbing. And Jesus seeks to comfort his disciples by saying this in *John 14*. He says: *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know."* For over 2,000 years now those words have been repeated as a source of great comfort to millions. Well, they were apparently of very little comfort to Thomas. Thomas knew one thing and one thing for sure, he knew Jesus was leaving. And as the scripture says in verse 5: *Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going, and how can we know the way?"* Thomas pretty much spoke for all the disciples and probably for us as well when he told Jesus that not only did he not know where Jesus was going, but none of

them knew the way to get there. Well, Jesus had a very legitimate answer to that question. In verse 6 it says: *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* Jesus is telling them that he was going to heaven itself and why, he says, *"I go to prepare a place for you."* But he was not merely showing the disciples the way, he was showing the disciples that He was the way, and he was explicitly declaring that the only way that you get to heaven is through Jesus through accepting him as Lord and Savior. See, Thomas's belief was very much like the belief of that man in Mark 9, the one, I don't know if you remember, his son had a demon that kept throwing him in the fire, and he came down and he begs the disciples to remove it. The disciples try and they fail. Jesus has to intervene. And he says to the man in Mark 9, he says: *"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."* Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, *"Lord, I believe; help me unbelief!"* Well, Jesus orders the demons out, they convulse the child but they leave, and what we see here is Jesus respecting the honest plea of someone struggling to believe. I think that's the kind of faith that Thomas had. I mean he believed in Christ enough to be willing to die for him and yet he oftentimes seemed to find himself unable to trust in Jesus's care for him. Perhaps that describes you as well. I mean, you can readily trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior but you have a hard time believing that he really, really cares

about what's going on in your life today. You may believe that he loves you, may believe that he died for you, you may even believe that he saved you but kind of now you're pretty much on your own. How foreign is this to Jesus? How foreign is this to the Jesus who said to Peter, "*feed my lambs*", "*tend my sheep*," "*feed my sheep*." That Jesus was talking about us. We were his passion.

I get it if you're struggling with thoughts that Jesus doesn't really care about the details of your life. And if that is the case, may I suggest to you that the reason for that happening is probably because you're the product of Western culture. You see, God is not really too distant, God is really too slow. That's really our problem. You see, we Westerners, we're really into speed. We want it yesterday. Speed is not nearly as important to Easterners, and God's pace is decidedly Eastern. You know if you're struggling, if you're wondering where is God in my life, how come I don't sense God's presence, God has abandoned me, he may have even saved me but I'm on my own, let me suggest you do something, let me suggest you find an older brother or sister, somebody who's been with the Lord many, many years, maybe decades, and ask them if they've ever gone through a period in their life where they felt like God was just absent, but don't forget to ask them if the passage of time changed that attitude. So much of believer's anguish at God has to do with our Western way of viewing

time. It really stems from not realizing that God's pace is not our pace. And when we think God should respond to us in a typically Western way that is almost instantaneously, we are really setting ourselves up for a big disappointment because God will not be put into a Western box simply because we want him there.

Think about what Peter said to us in *2 Peter 3*, he says: "*Dear friends, don't let this one thing escape you: With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.*" We're talking about a God who says, promises Abraham, says, "I will send you a son." And he does, 25 years later. And he never sent midway messages saying, "It's coming, it's coming, relax." 25 years. In God's mind that's okay. You see, God is not nearly as concerned with speed as he is with our good and His glory. And what was a source of great sorrow to Thomas was this inability to see things from God's perspective. I mean, that's really what put the doubt in Doubting Thomas. So ask God this morning, "Am I a doubter like Thomas?" as you consider God's warning about taking communion.

As we begin to distribute the bread, let me give you that warning. *1 Corinthians 11* says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat 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. Now I say this each month, I say communion is an extremely serious undertaking. You do not want to enter into it in an unworthy manner, because to do so is to court disaster. So if you're not absolutely confident that you are one of his own, that you are one of God's own children, if you haven't by faith trusted in Christ as your Savior or if you need to take care of some personal business, if you need to get right with your brother or sister before bringing yourself to the altar, so to speak, then just don't participate, just pass the elements on. On the other hand, and there's always a balance here, on the other hand you can make the mistake of thinking, well, I have to be absolutely faultless and perfect in order for me to participate in communion and the devil loves that as well. You see, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin, it doesn't mean that you don't fail. If you are a child of the King, what it means is that God lives inside you. Your body is a temple. The Holy Spirit lives in that temple. And if the Holy Spirit is inside you, he's going to move you. He's going to move you to understand that your salvation is a gift. Again I 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." But if you have the Spirit of God within you, you understand that he's convicting you, and when he convicts you of sin, you understand that's because God's spirit is inside of us and he's grieving us as children who have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us. It's never to just push us down. 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 you're spotless and that you're sinless, it means that you do have an advocate for you when you sin. Christ is now in heaven advocating for us. It says in *1 John 2:1*: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* And that's what's key here. You see, we have an alien righteousness, we have a foreign righteousness, it's not ours, it's his but he's given it to us by faith. And so because we have his righteousness and not our own, we're free to eat from his table. And so I say if you love the Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased for you. As we say, he lived the life that we all should have lived and then he died the death we all deserved to die so that we could be made worthy of heaven, and he did that so that we could live a life free of doubt. Spend some time just asking yourself, am I a doubter?

1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter 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 how do we deal with doubt? Well, let me give you some ideas. Many years ago I was in a little church in California and we had a traveling evangelist, and he came and he addressed -- this one time that he came he wanted to address the young people, junior church kids. I remember he wanted to give us all a little ditty to remember and so he told us he was going to teach us from *Psalm 34* which says: *Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!* Now you notice the Psalm has a very sing-song kind of quality, and see, he gathered the little ones around and he said, "I'm going to sing you the first part, I'm going to say the first part of the verse and you're going to say the second part." So he said, *"Taste and see that the LORD is good."* And then they said, *"Blessed is the one who trusts in Him!"* Let's see if we can do that. *Taste and see that the LORD is good. Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!* Easy. Well, you see it was easy for us to do that, it was easy for Thomas to get the first part of that, not so easy for him to get the second part. You see, Thomas had tasted and seen that the Lord was good. I mean how

could he not have? He was with Jesus for three years. He saw Jesus feed the hungry, he saw him heal the sick, he saw him raise the dead. No doubt he had very clearly tasted and seen that the Lord was indeed good. Well, the problem with most people is that they refuse to even taste. You know it's like trying to get an infant to eat ice cream for the very first time. You know what it's like. You know if you can just get it past their lips they'll be hooked and so you're zooming in like an airplane and you're going left and right as his mouth is going left and right just trying to get that into his mouth. You know if you do that they will immediately latch on to its goodness. And so it is with Christ. To taste is to sense his goodness. Thomas had clearly tasted and seen that the Lord was good but he was firmly in the category of the man whose son was demon possessed who told Jesus, *"Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief!"* See, Thomas tasted but he never fully trusted. When Jesus told the disciples that he was going to Judea, Thomas had tasted enough to know what Jesus was capable of but he didn't trust enough to see Jesus as anything but a victim. So he says, *"Let's go that we may die with him."* Well, you know that same kind of attitude persisted, and it persisted even through Christ's crucifixion, death and resurrection until after the resurrection when Jesus comes and literally calls him out. In *John 20* it says: *But one of the Twelve, Thomas (called "Twin"), was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples*

kept telling him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "If I don't see the mark of the nails in His hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will never believe!" Folks, this is serious, serious unbelief. Thomas is adamant, I mean, he doesn't care that these are his closest personal friends and they all to a man insist that they've seen the risen Lord. Thomas isn't having it. If I were to ask you at that very moment, would you say that Thomas was a believer? What would you say? I mean, well, first I would ask if you've ever had a Thomas moment yourself. I mean you have to remember what Thomas is saying, what Thomas's moment is all about didn't happen in a vacuum. It happened after the most dramatic and traumatic event of his life had just taken place. Thomas saw the Lord of his life, the very one who did great and mighty miracles even including raising the dead, he just saw him crucified. He saw him dead and buried. I mean in Thomas's mind this was not supposed to happen. Now, have you ever had something happen in your life that just wasn't supposed to happen? Something that shook your understanding of your faith to its very core? I mean, have you ever thought if God really cared about me, he wouldn't have allowed this, that or the other thing happen, so I'm having a really hard time trusting in his goodness and his love for me. I mean, have you ever felt like that? Well, Thomas obviously did. See, in spite of all that Jesus had done to earn his trust, in spite of all that Jesus had

said to prepare him for these events, in spite of all that Jesus had prophesied that had unfolded precisely as he said it would, I mean, if you look at *Matthew 16*, Jesus says: *From then on Jesus began to point out to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day.* This was no surprise. Jesus was instructing them over and over again, but it all, it meant nothing when push came to shove and the trauma of Jesus' death drove all hope out of Thomas's heart. But there's good news in this as well. Jesus was once asked by a group of unbelieving Jews if he indeed was the Messiah. In *John 10* they say, *"If You are the Messiah, tell us plainly."* *"I did tell you and you don't believe,"* Jesus answered them. *"The works that I do in My Father's name testify about Me. But you don't believe because you are not My sheep."* It's very important not to get Jesus's words here out of order. Very important to understand what Jesus is saying. Jesus is telling these unbelieving Jews that in spite of the miracles that he did in their presence, that they would not believe for one specific reason: They were not his sheep. Understand, Jesus didn't say, *"If you don't believe, you're not one of my sheep."* He didn't say that. He said, *"because you're not one of my sheep, you don't believe."* There's a huge difference in those two statements. See, it's God's sheep who've been given the grace to *taste and see that the LORD is good. Blessed is the man who*

trusts in him! Those who are not his sheep, they refuse to even taste. The cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it's God's power to us who are being saved. See, Thomas had a moment of unbelief. Well, so did Peter but he was still one of Christ's sheep. Jesus said: "My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish -- ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." See, because Thomas was still one of Christ's sheep, Jesus directly addresses his unbelief. In verse 26 it says: After eight days His disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and observe My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Don't be an unbeliever, but a believer." Thomas responded to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Those who believe without seeing are blessed."

Now, folks make a big deal out of the fact that Jesus appeared before his disciples while they were in this locked and sealed room but that alone doesn't prove anything really. It proves as one commentator made the statement that Jesus is either capable of teleporting, that he could pick a lock or that he can slip in

unawares. See, what really matters in this passage is what Jesus is speaking to Thomas and what he is showing Thomas. And there's no doubt he's castigating Thomas as an unbeliever, he says, "*Don't be an unbeliever but a believer.*" But understand exactly what Jesus is demonstrating here. I mean it's not so much his physical proof, what he's demonstrating is his astounding graciousness. I mean Jesus is addressing the very people who had abandoned him in a moment of his greatest need. I mean, we're eight days removed from the cross itself and Jesus is showing Thomas his scars. I mean Jesus had been nailed through his hands and his feet with six-inch rusty Roman nails that if you know anything about them, they used them over and over again. They weren't about to throw them out and get new ones. I mean how filthy do you think those nails and that spearhead was?

As the elders begin to distribute the cup, I'd like you to imagine what your hands and your feet would look like if you had had those spikes driven through them only days previous. And what would the wound in your side look like if a Roman spear had been thrust between your ribs up into the pericardium surrounding your heart? Had these been ordinary wounds in an ordinary body, there would have been obvious signs of profound infection. But Jesus is presenting Thomas with a resurrected body that no longer bears any sign of the curse that Jesus entered into for us, with one

exception, it's the scars. *"Put your fingers here and observe My hands."* *"Reach out your hand and put it into My side,"* Jesus says. It's from this text that we conclude that Jesus for all time will bear the marks of his crucifixion.

You know it's almost incomprehensible to consider that Jesus so thoroughly identifies with us that for all time he now has a body just like ours. You see, from eternity past through his creation of the physical universe and up to the moment that we celebrate as Christmas, Jesus never had a physical body. I mean, he was like the Father, he was like the Holy Spirit, a non corporeal being. I mean he didn't possess a body and therefore he had none of the limitations that a solid body would present. 2,000 years ago in a barn in Bethlehem he began this transformation into flesh, not just for the 33 years that he would live on earth but forever. And for all eternity Jesus will be like us in flesh. We don't know a great deal about the body that he now has other than to know what he wants us to know about it. And it's clear that he wants us to know that it's a real body with real flesh and bone and not some kind of spiritual emanation.

There's another account of Jesus meeting with the disciples in Luke, and in this account Jesus is demonstrating to them exactly what type of body he's appearing in. This is *Luke 24*, it says:

Now as they said these things, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. "It's me, guys," says Jesus, "touch me, feel me, grab me, see for yourselves." But the scripture says they were still not convinced. It says: *But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?" So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And he took it and ate it in their presence.* Jesus wasn't asking them for food because he was hungry, he did it to demonstrate that he was real, that he was a real flesh and bone person. So the first marvel of Jesus' grace to us is that he will forever identify as one of us. But the second and most amazing marvel of all is the scars.

You know, I have to chuckle when I read about famous people falling in love and getting their loved one's name tattooed prominently somewhere on their body, and then you read a few months later that everything has gone to pot and this person's now trying to find a way to either erase it or to use it creatively some other way, kind of funny and sad at the same time. Funny to see how fickle and

short-lived these romances are, and sad to see an attempt to demonstrate the permanence of love fail so completely and so quickly. But think of Jesus' tattoo for us. His tattoo was a gash in his side and holes in his hands and his feet. It's a tattoo that Jesus has to demonstrate his love for us and it's forever. I thought of that Michael Card song, many of you have heard many, many years ago, it captured what Jesus has done for us, it said: "The marks of death that God chose never to erase, the wounds of loves eternal war, when the kingdom comes with its perfected sons he will be known by the scars."

You know Thomas had tasted, he had seen that the Lord was good. His taste of God's goodness came in the form of a loving rebuke of a failure to embrace the second part of that verse that we've looked at. *Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in him!* See for believers, for those of us who are his sheep, there is a choice. We can live our lives like Thomas once did, full of doubt, full of depression, absent the joy that comes when we're simply willing to trust that our own limited understanding of things will in no way serve to define the God who loved us enough to die for us, or we can take the risk of trusting what we don't know and can't fully understand, take that to a Lord who loves us enough to bear our scars forever.

Just take a moment to contemplate the love of God in Christ Jesus represented by those scars. *1 Corinthians 11* 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.

This is the part that we call heart, hands and feet, where we try to look for some kind of practical application of just what it means to remember Jesus Christ. And today I want to spend some time looking at a person, someone who's life was that practical application. Most of you know that Pete Albert died this week and I recognize that most of you don't know who Pete Albert was. He was one of our original elders. He was here at the very beginning of Grace Fellowship some 26 years ago, a guy who jumped in with both feet. He was not here that long, he left Grace fairly early. He moved with his wife Fran and his two boys to the Washington D.C. area, but I still managed to keep in touch with him. But Pete was the kind of person who just managed to grab and life to the max. He was one of these kind of "peddle to the metal" type of guys, he piloted his own hot air balloon, he loved to sail, he loved to ski, he loved to mountain climb. He was on the staff at Young Life Lake Champion which is how we really got to know him. He was the guy who designed the rope courses and the zip lines and he eventually turned that into a business and he ran all over the country

installing those things. The last real interaction that I had with Pete was many, many years ago. He was opening a camp on the Potomac River in Maryland and I was still in the cabinet business. It was a very big camp, a huge undertaking, they needed lots of cabinets, lots of furniture. And he called me up and he asked me if I wanted the job. And he sent me the plans and it was a huge job for a small shop like ours. I thought we could handle it, but just like Pete, he was entirely willing to take that risk just on my say-so. I remember him and his buddy Pat, they just took the opportunity, they jumped on their Harleys, they did a road trip from Baltimore up to Port Jervis just to go over the contract. That's what Pete was like, he was a risk-taker. I mean he was the kind of guy that I would describe as cool with that special kind of cool that a person has who doesn't even know that he has it. I mean he lived life with a gusto that never, ever became a swagger. But the most important thing about Pete, the thing that really matters is that if you knew Pete, you knew he loved Jesus. I mean when he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, he attacked it the way he attacked life, with a huge sense of humor and a realization that God was in charge and he had a plan for everything including his cancer. I mean he saw cancer as just another road trip that he and Jesus were going to take. He referred to the tumor on his pancreas as "Tommy the tumor," you remember that, and then he set up this -- this chemo routine so that at the end, he was going to

have an eviction party. He was going to kill Tommy and evict him. And he was successful, the chemo worked, Tommy was evicted. But the success didn't last very long and the cancer came back and took his life. But what a life. I mean he left at age 62, but he could look back on this incredible success that he had at living his life for Christ. I mean, I spent some time looking at his Facebook page, he has a Facebook page that Pete and Fran set up, it was called "Team Pete's Pancreas." That's typical of Pete. There were over 300 posts from people whose lives that Pete had affected. Many of them pointed out the presence of Jesus that they had seen in Pete. Many of them described how Pete's love of Christ and love for life itself had changed their lives. That's the measure of a successful life. One person posted of Pete: "One of my favorite humans, ever." That's a great post. I mean Pete lived an incredibly successful life not just because he grabbed it with gusto but because he grabbed Jesus with the very exact same gusto. And he just couldn't help but share that with the people that he came in contact with. Paul's words could have been Pete's. Paul said: *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. There is reserved for me in the future the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to those who have loved His appearing.* There was a part of me that envies Pete. I'll be very frank about it, I'm envied of the fact that he's

finished his race and he did it so well. All of us are in the middle of our own races. Some of us are at the very beginning, some of us are at the middle, some of us are approaching the end, but when we get to the end, we're going to find out that nothing else matters but Christ. Only when life is so soon it will pass, only what's done for Christ will last. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for Pete. I thank you for what his life represented. I thank you for the success of his life. And Father, I just want to continue to pray for Fran, I pray for the rest of the family, I pray for the pain and the ache of losing Pete, knowing that he's doing just fine, but the family is going to be hurting for a good while. I just pray that we would take a lesson from Pete and recognize that what matters is Christ. Give us the ability to draw from him that same example and to make our lives count in the same way, I pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.