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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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The Man Born Blind

Communion Message

Prayer: *Father, I just thank you that your love truly never does fail. And Lord, we have proof of that and the proof of that is the cross. Thank you for that proof, Lord. And again, this day is a day we set aside once a month to focus in on the cross, on what you have done for us at the cross. And Father, I just again pray as we begin this exercise that you would give us the presence and the power of your Holy Spirit, that you would come upon us as a body, that you would give us the ability to again open up your words, to understand them not merely as words but as a love note sent from the Father to his children. Give us the ability to understand it, give us the ability to make it a permanent part of our lives, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, 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 and there for the last time celebrated a Passover supper with them. Matthew 26:26 describes it, 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 the bread and he took the wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and of his blood, and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood, and then he asked them to repeat this remembrance of his sacrifice on a regular basis, and this is what we call the Lord's table, and we celebrate it once a month and we do that by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, by examining ourselves, asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, by confessing our sins and then by participating in the elements. John 6:53 says this: 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 following the life of Jesus and so far we've worked our way up to the ninth chapter of the gospel of John. Now you may remember where we were the last time, Jesus has just finished this conversation that he's had with the "mere believers." It was a conversation that started out with him offering them freedom and it

ended up with them picking up rocks to try to stone him. We talked about the difference between that confrontation and the one that Jesus had with the woman at the well. Now she was gloriously saved by her confrontation with Jesus, and these mere believers, well, they were absolutely repulsed by the very same gospel. And we pointed out that regardless the response, God was equally glorified by the woman at the well as he was by this murderous crowd. You see, in both cases, the word that proceeded from Christ's mouth accomplished what God desired and achieved the purpose for which he sent it. In the case of the woman at the well, it was the mercy of God that was gloriously manifest and gloriously accomplished. In the case of this murderous crowd, these folks who had completely and totally rejected the gospel, well, it was the justice of God that was gloriously manifested and also accomplished. You see, in the end what mattered most to Christ was the glory of God. And so regardless the outcome of a faithful presentation of the gospel, God's justice or his mercy is going to be glorified because God's words will not return empty. And so despite this violent reaction that Jesus receives, Jesus was triumphant. You see, if the gospel is accurately given, you may be laughed at, you may be mocked, you may be scorned, you may be ignored, but God will always be glorified.

We start out this morning at John 9 with an incident involving a

blind man, and the incident centers on this idea of glory. *John 9:1-3* says this: *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"* You see, the disciples had to have an answer to the "why" question, and as far as they were concerned, it was really a choice between only two specific options. The reason why the man was born blind was of course because of sin, they thought, and the two choices were either him or his parents. Well, Jesus introduces a third option that they've never seen thought of, in verse 3, he says this: *Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."* This is an option that we seldom consider. You see, our search for the answer "why," it often leads us to conclude that when bad things happen, it's got to be the result of something I've done, you know, must have done somebody wrong, something that I can't quite put my finger on, something I've done that is causing this pain. Well, that's a possibility. But there's other possibilities as well. And Jesus strikes down this particular misunderstanding by simply stating in verse 3: *"It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."* Now, I can almost hear somebody thinking, "Really God?" I mean really you're willing to have a person blind from birth just so that his healing can bring you glory? Really? See, this person was not only blind,

he was also begging, which means the blindness affected his entire life to the point where his existence was defined by his disability, and clearly his life had a very low quality as he was reduced to the life of a beggar so that Christ through healing him could demonstrate his power and his authority over disease.

Question. You can answer this inside your mind, nobody's looking: Is there something about that that offends you? I mean, does it bother you that Christ puts a higher priority on his glory than he does on the sight of a man who's been born blind? Again: *"It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."* See, what Jesus is actually saying here is that glorifying God is a greater good than this man having his sight. So again we have to ask ourselves and again this is an internal thing, does the thought of that in some way offend you? I mean, do you and I value the manifestation of the works of God enough so that the loss of sight would be an acceptable payment for that glory to be revealed? See, if God were to take away your sight or your health or your money or your friends or your reputation, anything that you value highly in order to manifest his glory, would that be okay? God took this man's sight and we know that he's also taken many, many precious things from others. I mean, he certainly took Job's health. We know that Jesus demanded the rich man's money. He took Joseph's reputation. He took Paul's

freedom, Stephen's life. He as much has said these are prices worth paying for the expression of My glory. Does that sit okay? Now Paul offers us a rationale for why God would make such a demand. This is what he says in *2 Corinthians 4:16*, he says: *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* Paul right here gives us a formula. What he's saying is light and momentary affliction yields eternal glory beyond all comparison. Do you believe that? See, the man born blind suffered under his blindness let's just say for -- I don't know, 40 years. Now his time in heaven reaping the eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison that he received in return for that blindness has been so far, give or take, about 2,000 years. That's return on investment of about 5,000 percent. That's 40 years of affliction yielding 2,000 years of glory so far, and we know that every single day that follows will grow that investment rather than shrink it.

So here's another question: If you had the advantage of knowing that investing your life would yield such an incredible return, would you be willing to subject yourself to an investment that you

might think at first is a lousy deal? That's what Jesus did for this man born blind. You see, I think many people think right off the bat that this guy got a lousy deal. I mean a life of blindness, a life of begging, all so that Jesus could receive some glory? I think that misses the point fundamentally on a couple different levels, and the first as we just mentioned is simple economics. To be willing to invest is to be willing to delay gratification, and Jesus time and time again spoke about a willingness to delay gratification as a source of reward. He said a willingness to delay gratification by investing your lives in the here and now will yield amazing dividends with him in the future. This is what he said in *Matthew 6*, he said: "*But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*" In *Luke 6:35* he says: "*But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great.*" *Colossians 3:23* says: *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you*

will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

So the first is simple economics, the second is the idea that being offended at the blind man's faith misunderstands what our existence is about in the first place. You know, it's easy to think of this man's blindness as the exception when we should be thinking of this opportunity for God's glory as the rule. This is what we were put on this planet for. This is why we exist.

Once again, the Westminster Catechism answers the question: "What is the chief end of man" by saying what? "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." And what Jesus gave as his answer to the disciples' question about the blind man is the exact working definition of what glorifying God consists of. Listen: "That the works of God might be displayed in him." It's that simple. I've said it many times, that our lives are supposed to be walking billboards of the grace and glory of God. We're actively here to display the character and the attributes of God. But there's a part that we seldom consider. There's a down side to this. And that is the majority of time the display of God's glory is going to involve stress, it's going to involve struggle, and it's going to involve suffering. And that's not my opinion, this is God's statement of fact. *1 Peter 4:12: Beloved, do not be*

surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. I think it's a totally legitimate question to say well, why in the world is sharing in suffering the venue that displays Christ's glory? Again, listen to what Paul says in Romans 8:16. He says: *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* Paul's saying that God's glory is revealed through suffering. Just stop and consider for a moment if the opposite was true. Just stop to consider what it would be like if God were to demonstrate his glory by granting us happiness, health, wealth, and prosperity as some preachers like to suggest. Well, if it were true that that's what Christ was offering us instead of a cross, that we basically were given a pathway to health, wealth, and prosperity, well then to be a Christian would be a guarantee that our lives would be a success, and if people understood that as a genuine guarantee, this church would be filled to overflowing. We'd have to offer tickets and people would have to get in on a rotating basis. People would be falling all over themselves to have a

relationship with someone who could fix everything that's broken in their life. And we've seen evidence of that in Jesus' own ministry. Jesus miraculously fed the crowds and instantly he attracted a huge following, but they weren't really interested in him. They were interested in what they could get from him. *John 6:26* says: *Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."*

Before we condemn these folks, we need to ask ourselves just what is it we have come to Jesus looking for? I think one of the blessings of this incident with the blind man is that we can use it to test our own attitudes. You see, to the extent -- and again, you can only answer this inside your own minds, inside your own hearts -- to the extent that we are offended that Christ would use this man's blindness for his glory is the extent that we don't fully grasp what the glory of God really is all about. John Piper sums it up by saying this, he says, "When Jesus says, the purpose of this blindness is 'That the works of God might be displayed in him,' he assumes the manifestation of the works of God, has a value that outweighs years and years of blindness both for the man and his parents. In order to embrace that, we have to value the manifestation of the works of God more than we value seeing. Indeed more than we value life itself."

So the question is: Do you value God's glory more than you value life itself? Consider this morning what matters most in my life. As the elders come forward to begin distributing the bread, I urge you to consider also the warning that God gives. Let me just read it to you. This is *1 Corinthians 11:28*. God's word 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.* I repeat this warning every month and I say basically communion is extremely serious business, and to enter into it in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster. If you are not absolutely confident that you are a child of the King or if you first in some way need to be reconciled to your brother before you bring your sacrifice to the altar, then just pass these elements on as they come to you, and I say it every month, nobody's going to flip out when they see that, they're just going to accept, that's okay. But on the other hand, you can make the mistake of thinking unless we're spotlessly perfect we are unworthy to receive communion. I want to point out that that, too, is a mistake. You know, being a child of the King does not mean that we don't sin and

that we never fail. What it means is that when we do fail, we understand that we have sinned because God's Spirit is now inside us convicting us of sin and so we grieve as children who know we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us. This is what God says in *1 John 1:9*, he says: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So being a child of the King does not mean that you are without sin. It means that when we sin, we realize we have an advocate, someone who speaks for us with the Father. *1 John 2:1* says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* And so because we have Jesus' righteousness and not our own, we are now free to eat from his table. So if you love your Lord, do not deny yourself this privilege that he's purchased for you. So take a moment to consider the glory of God. *1 Corinthians 11:23* says this: *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.

Joni Eareckson Tada speaks of a remarkable encounter that she had with the scripture early in the time of her quadriplegia. She's been over 40 years -- most of you know who Joni is, she's been over

40 years in a wheelchair paralyzed from the neck down. She had been desperately searching the scriptures looking for a way to find healing, and she had become bitter and depressed when she encountered this text at the very beginning of the gospel of Mark. Let me read this to you. This is *Mark 1:33: And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you."*

Just set the stage here. Jesus has spent the previous day healing the sick and the lame and the word is out that there is a great healer who is here, so the crowds are gathering, the crowds are increasing. He spends the early morning in prayer and the disciples are desperately looking for him 'cause there's this huge crowd is still gathering awaiting his healing touch. His response is stunning. The disciples come up to him and they say to him, "Everyone is looking for you!" He says let's go somewhere else. This is what he said, verse 38: *And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."* Joni describes encountering this scripture this way,

she said: She said, "That's when it hit me. Oh did it hit me. It's not that Jesus didn't care about all of those sick and diseased people, it's just that their problems were not his main focus. The gospel was. The gospel that says: Sin kills, hell is real, but God is merciful, and his kingdom can change you, and Jesus alone is the way." She went on to say, "Whenever people missed this, whenever they started coming to Jesus just to get their pain and problems fixed, the Savior would always back away." See, it hit Joni like a thunderbolt why she had been so depressed. It's because she was into Jesus simply to get her problems and her paralysis fixed. She said she realized that the same Jesus who had healed withered hands and blind eyes also said: "Cut off that hand and gouge out that eye if it leads you into sin." She went on to say: "I got the picture. To me physical healing had always been the big deal but to God, my soul was a much bigger deal. And that's when I began searching for a much deeper healing, a Psalm 139: 'Search me oh God' type healing, a 'Cleanse me from every sin and set me free' type of healing." You see, it cost Joni dearly to learn just what it was that Jesus was offering to any and all who would open up their eyes and their ears, and it took her a good deal of time to realize that quadriplegia was not her primary issue and that healing her soul was of far more importance to Jesus than healing her body. See, it's what she wanted from Jesus in the first place that Jesus had to wean her from. Again, John Piper

says: "If you come to Jesus only to get what the world wants, then he's a bellhop. If you come to Jesus to get Jesus, he is honored." Seeking his glory is what honors Jesus. And in simply living the life that God has given to each one of us, we have the exact same opportunity and the exact same challenge. I mean we may not be in a wheelchair and we may not be blind, but I wonder if we realize that what God's son was saying to the blind man is what precisely what he says to you and me. We exist *"that the works of God might be displayed in us."*

Well, now you might say well, you know, I haven't been put into a situation as unique as the one this man was put in, I mean, after all, his blindness gave him the perfect opportunity to point people to the Savior which is just what he did. But it wasn't an easy path. Let me just read to you from the gospel of John, the ninth chapter, how this unfolds. This is *John 9:18*, it says: *The Jews did not believe this about him -- that he was blind and received sight -- until they summoned the parents of the one who had received his sight. They asked them, "Is this your son, the one you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" "We know this is our son and that he was born blind," his parents answered, "but we don't know how he now sees, and we don't know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he's of age. He will speak for himself." His parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jews,*

since the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him as Messiah, he would be banned from the synagogue. To be banned from the synagogue was to be banned from every single aspect of Jewish life, it was to be cut off socially, economically, and spiritually, and it was so horrifying a prospect that the blind man's own parents were really willing to throw him under the bus in order to avoid it. And the one who truly had no fear at all in this was the blind man.

As the elders begin distributing the cup, let me continue reading as this unfolds. This is John 9:24, it says: So a second time they summoned the man who had been blind and told him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner!" He answered, "Whether or not he's a sinner, I don't know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!" Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" "I already told you", he said, "and you didn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don't want to become one his disciples too, do you?" This is nothing less than a biting satirical rebuke from a man the Pharisees considered to be lower than pond scum. I mean, this man was not only fearless, he was making them look like absolute buffoons, and they were outraged. In verse 28, they ridiculed him: "You're that man's disciple, but we're Moses' disciples. We know that God has spoken to Moses. But this man -- we don't know where

he's from!" "This is an amazing thing," the man told them. "You don't know where He is from, yet He opened my eyes." See, the blind man knew who he was talking to and he knew that there was going to be dire consequences and yet he boldly continued to speak the truth. He goes on to say in verse 31: "We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is God fearing and does his will, he listens to him. Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he wouldn't be able to do anything." See, the blind man's logic was absolutely compelling, but logic is not what turns souls to Christ. In fact it just drove them deeper and deeper into blindness and rage. They say in John 9:34: "You were born entirely in sin," they replied, "and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out. See, the blind man's brutal honesty cost him socially and economically, but spiritually it literally saved his soul, and Jesus himself sought him out. In verse 35 it says: When Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, he found him and asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him," he asked. Jesus answered, "You have seen Him; in fact, He is the One speaking with you." "I believe, Lord!" he said, and he worshiped Him.

Now we know in the short term, the blind man suffered real loss. But in the end and for all eternity, he has this treasure in

heaven. And not that he earned it but that Christ's through his death on the cross had earned it for him. I think he would be the very first one to tell you that he got the best end of the deal. And may I suggest to you that we have the exact same situation that he had. Jesus described his ministry right from the beginning in Luke 4 by saying this: *The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind.*" You see, that word "blind," that word perfectly describes our spiritual state when Jesus came to rescue every one of us. In John 9:39 it says: *Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind."* Now the blind man of John 9 had a physical handicap, no doubt. Ours is far more deadly. Ours is spiritual. But you know, our salvation gives us the exact same opportunity that he had to show the world that we are no longer blind. When Jesus answered the disciples' question by saying, *"It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him,"* he was identifying exactly what our task in this is as well. We get to tell folks I once was lost but now am found -- was what? -- was blind but now I see. And whatever it is that we do, whether it's being a housewife, or a lawyer, or a policeman, or a businessman, a teacher, a homemaker, it doesn't matter what it is you do, what matters is that the works of God be

displayed in you. See, every one of us has the privilege of explaining to those around us the blindness that each of us had lived with since we were born, a blindness that precluded us understanding that what divides people in God's eyes is not who is good and who is bad, but instead who is blind and who can see. See, the vast majority of people are blind to the fact that in God's economy there's no such thing as good and bad, but only those who know they are bad and those who do not. Those who know that they are bad are those who cling to Jesus knowing that He is the source of their righteousness. And those who do not know that they are bad are those who think that their lives or their obedience or their religious behavior in some way makes them worthy of heaven. They are in Jesus' eyes, blind to their own blindness. It's just what we see played out at the end of the chapter in *John 9:40*, it says: *Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things and asked him, "We aren't blind too, are we?" "If you were blind," Jesus told them, "you wouldn't have sin. But now that you say, 'we see' -- your sin remains."*

See, we are, all of us, a picture of the blind man of John 9. I mean, each of us suffered from congenital spiritual blindness at some point in our spiritual lives, and at some point we received the sight that Jesus alone can give. And we need to remember that he healed us for the very same reason that he healed the blind man,

that the works of God might be displayed in us. Again *Ephesians 2:10*: *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.* So we also face the exact same challenge that the blind man faced.

As you pray and meditate, just consider asking God for the privilege of displaying his workmanship in your own life as a person previously blind who now can see. Ask him for the grace to be able to have the courage like the blind man had to speak up even in the face of opposition, to speak up even when you know it is going to be costly. I mean, we know it cost the blind man dearly to speak the truth. What we don't know is whether or not it's going to cost us dearly, and that's a real possibility. So ask God for the grace to be willing to pay that price and for the wisdom to speak out that willingness as well as the blind man did. Take a moment to meditate on that.

1 Corinthians 11:25 says this: *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."* Take, and drink.

This is the part of the service where we speak about heads, hands, and feet, which is the practical application of what it means to

remember the Lord Jesus Christ. And I just want to share with you something that happened this week. This has been a very interesting week. Let me just back up a little bit and just tell that what God has laid on the hearts of those of us in leadership in the church is the urgency for us to become a praying church. And you've heard us say this over and over and over again how important it is to be part of corporate prayer, how important it is to have a culture where prayer is a primary understanding of what it takes to move the church forward, and we have been convinced over and over again that we have failed in our ability to convince you all of how important that is, and the fall back for that is oh, make them feel guilty, make them come out, make them do this, make them -- manipulate them in some way. We refuse to do that. We don't want anybody here because they feel guilty or they feel pressed, but by the same token, we don't know how to get people to understand that this church will never move forward without prayer. And so we have been back and forth and so we decided to take a day of prayer and fasting for the elders to just ask God how do we do this, how do we get the body to understand how incredibly critical it is to pray. And so last Wednesday, we had our -- Wednesday is the day when the elders pray for the entire church, and so it's a long night of prayer and so we decided to take that Wednesday and make it a day of fasting and then we would end it with prayer, and the day before that Janice and I were visiting Sylvia Butzgy. Now,

those of you who don't know Sylvia, Sylvia is 93 years old, she's been wheelchair bound for about the same time as Joni or even longer I guess, she had a wound that's not healing, so she's at Valley View in Goshen, it's a rehab center. So we were over there just visiting with her, and as we were over there visiting, one of the therapists came in the room, a woman came in the room and you could tell there was this mutual love between Sylvia and this gal, that walked in, say, I love this gal, and she said I love this gal and they were just kind of chatting back and forth. And so she introduced me to her and we had some -- some things in common, her husband went to Minisink and so we talked about what it was like in the school and she said that she had heard that it's gotten much, much worse over the years. And I said well, you know, I said, the culture has gotten much, much worse and people have gotten far, far away from what the biblical understanding of a family is and the way things are supposed to be, and people are getting more and more disconnected and feeling out of control and that's why people are coming back to God. And she told me how she went to a -- she told me that she went to a local church, et cetera. And so Sylvia was talking to Janice and I was talking to her, we had an interesting conversation, and that was basically it, and we said good-bye. Before I said good-bye to Sylvia, she was complaining about being 93, what is God doing with me here, I mean, come on. And I said, Sylvia, you still got work to do. I said, you know this gal here,

you could present the gospel to her, you could do all of these kind of things. So that was on Tuesday. Wednesday we had the day of prayer and fasting and so after -- after that, you know, we -- we didn't get the results immediately that we thought we would get, so we kind of sat around feeling sorry for ourselves, right, we did. God, you didn't open up the skies and give us some incredible miracle. What's the deal? We all fasted. It didn't work like that. But we sat around, we said God's going to give us the next piece in this, and one of the things that Steve said which I am totally in agreement with is prayer walking. We used to walk the neighborhoods of Port Jervis and just pray, pray for Port Jervis, pray for each house as you saw it or a business or something, and God did a work when we did that. And we haven't done that for years, and let me tell you, Port Jervis is going down. So that was one of the things that came out of that, we need to start prayer walking again for this town that this church is part of. Anyway, so we got home, I got home, and it was fairly late when I got home and I didn't expect a phone call. I got a phone call from Sylvia Butzgy. I pick up the phone and she says, she says the angels in heaven are rejoicing and you need to rejoice because Karen asked Christ to be the Lord of her life. And I was astounded because I mean, she's a very sweet gal but, you know, Sylvia said we started talking I said, how'd that happen? Well, we started talking about eternal things and we got to heaven and hell, and I asked her,

Where do you think you're going? She said, I think I'm going to heaven, and I said why, and she said because I think I'm a good person, and that gave me the opportunity to explain to her the gospel. And having done that, she got it, she understood, and I said would you like to ask Christ into your life and she said yes, I would. And so she prayed right then and there for that person.

Now I'm a person that likes to put dots together. And the dots that I put together is -- is we prayed, we fasted, we went before God, we said God, we would love to see that you hear and that you respond, and here's this wonderful dear 93-year-old wheel bound -- wheelchair bound saint in a nursing home as the conduit leading somebody to Christ. She's one of us. I think what God was saying is look, the gospel is where the power is, and the power of the gospel is unleashed through prayer. And what I heard God saying to us is you're on the right track. You want to see the power of the gospel? You pray. And God who is the God of all coincidences just arranged this coincidence. I said to my wife this morning, I said, you know, this man who was born blind, 40 years blindness, could it be that God put Sylvia in a wheelchair for fifty years to have the opportunity to speak to this woman who was a therapist and lead her into the kingdom? Why not? Well, that's a terrible thing somebody would be wheelchair bound for that long for that -- we don't get God's economy. 5,000, 10,000, 500,000 years from now Sylvia is

going to look at this and say hey, that was a piece of cake. The return on investment for her being in that wheelchair will be enormous. The return on investment for us of praying that God would unleash the power of the gospel is being able to participate in the privilege of seeing God work. I think God wants to do mighty things through us. He wants to do mighty things in Port Jervis but he will not do it until we understand the power of prayer. So that's what our prayer was. Our prayer is that we would grow to understand that God's not going to move until we get that right. So let's pray.

Father God, we do first of all rejoice, we rejoice in this young woman coming to know you as Lord and Savior through Sylvia, we just rejoice that a dear saint would be able to share the good news. And Lord, I am absolutely convinced that you are the God who arranges all things and you arrange the timing for this to be perfect, that we had just spent the day in prayer and fasting and that one of ours, one of our sheep had the privilege of leading someone into the kingdom. Father, we just praise you and thank you for that. And Lord, it goes without saying that you're trying to tell us something here, Lord, the gospel is the power and the power is unleashed through prayer. Give us the ability to become the praying church that you want us to, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.