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

**July 1, 2018**

**The Power of Submission**

**1 Peter 2:12-18**

**Prayer:** *Father, once again we just praise you and thank you for this day, we praise you and thank you for the gift of your Son and for this first day of the month, first Sunday of the month that we spend focusing on you and the cross and just what that gift entails. And so this morning, Lord, we pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit. We want to offer up worship to you that is acceptable, worship to you that is pleasing. And so we pray for this part of the service, Lord, that your Spirit would guide us, that you would fill us and that you would enable us to look into your word and to bring out of it something of permanent value. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, like I said, this is the day that we worship Christ and his cross and we go back to the original night where Jesus met with his disciples and celebrated a Passover supper with them. In *Matthew 26:26* says this, it says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it he 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." Well Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and of his blood and then he asked the disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup so that they might symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And he asked them to remember this on a regular basis and we call that "the Lord's table" and we celebrate it once a month and we do that by first meditating on what it is exactly that Christ did on the cross and then by examining ourselves, and to do that we have to ask God's Holy Spirit to point out areas where he's convicting us of sin and then having done that, we confess our sin and then participate in the elements. In *John 6:53* it 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."*

So we've been working our way through the Gospel of John speaking about the cross and the crucifixion, and we've gotten ourselves to the 19th chapter. And if you remember the last time, we looked at the hideous line that opens up that chapter. It's *John 19:1* which says: *Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.* And we marveled, we

marveled that the Creator and the Sustainer, the King of the universe would allow himself to be so abused by mere humans. But we also noted that Jesus was no victim, because each and every part of this passion of the Christ was played out by people basically following their own free wills but doing precisely what God had orchestrated.

Well, I want to shift our attention a little bit now to what happened after Pilate presents the beaten, the bruised, the mocked, the flogged, and spit on Jesus now clad in a purple robe now wearing a crown of thorns. There is so much going on behind the scenes here that it's going to take a little bit of unpacking to recognize. And what we see as we look at the dialogue taking place here is that Pilate is basically engaged in a running back-and-forth with the religious leaders and it's over the fate of Jesus. And we spoke last time about how Pilate was so absolutely convinced of Jesus's innocence that three separate times he declared: "I find no guilt in him." In spite of the fact that he knew that Jesus was innocent, Pilate was quite willing to sacrifice Jesus' life on the altar of expediency. And so we pick up the story after Jesus has just been flogged. This is *John 19* starting at verse 5. It says: *So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify*

*him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.*

So we ask what was it that Pilate was afraid of? Well, there were two different sources of fear that was affecting Pilate. One was natural, one was supernatural. First the natural fear. The natural fear centered on Pilate's precarious political position. Pilate knew that he was on thin ice politically. Tiberias who was the Caesar at the time had grown more and more allied with Pilate's rival Herod and there had already been a number of political decisions that Caesar had made that were in favor of Herod and really against Pilate, so he knew that he was not in the best position politically. In addition, Pilate himself had been through a number of political missteps and he knew that another mistake could easily cost him his career. Furthermore it was the time of Passover and Jerusalem was going to be filled to overflowing with pilgrims who were coming in all over the land and Pilate knew that this was going to make it into a powder keg just waiting for the right mix to cause rioting and disturbances which we also knew would end his career. So against that backdrop of political instability, Pilate also had these Jewish religious leaders playing

off his fears with a series of veiled threats. Now if you recall when Jesus was first brought before Pilate, he and the Jews had this following exchange. This is from *John 18* starting at verse 29. It says: *So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."* See, Pilate wanted nothing to do with the Jews or with this Jesus or any other situation that could potentially get him into deeper trouble with Caesar. So it says: *The Jews said to him, "It's not lawful for us to put anyone to death."* Well, you know, Pilate may well have just said to the Jews, since when did you start caring about being lawful? See, the fact is both Pilate and the Jews detested each other and both of them were trying to threaten each other without actually using the words. So Pilate then interviews Jesus and he finds him disturbingly composed, disturbingly rational and he sees him as no threat whatsoever. And thinking he can finally outfox the Jews, he offers the crowd a choice, the choice is between Barabbas and Jesus.

So we're working our way through John's gospel but John's gospel barely hints at what's actually taking place between the Jews and Pilate here. It just quotes Pilate saying in verse 39: *"But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the*

*Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber. Like I said, that's the bare bones story. It's Matthew's gospel that really fleshes out just who is involved in influencing the crowd and why they chose Barabbas. This is Matthew 27. It says: And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream." Now the chief priests and elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.*

So what we have going on here is Pilate makes a move to release Jesus and the religious leaders make a counter move, they stir up the crowd *"to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus."* At the same time in Matthew's gospel we see the second source of the fear that's activated in Pilate, and it was his wife's dream. Pilate gets word from his wife who refers to Jesus as quote *"a righteous man,"* she tells Pilate have nothing to do with this man. You know Pilate may well have represented the state of Rome but that doesn't mean that he was an atheist or that he was even a secularist.

Pilate like most Romans was deeply, deeply suspicious, and he certainly was not interested in turning either Caesar or the gods against him. So this word from his wife deeply unnerves him. Now the combination of natural and supernatural forces, it begins to fill Pilate with this existential dread. And to make matters far worse, the sight of the broken and bleeding Jesus now drives the religious leaders to demand Jesus' crucifixion.

Again we pick up at verse 7: *When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.* Well, you can hear the frustration in Pilate's voice as you look at the dialogue. He's struggling with what he knows is right and what he knows is cowardly and he's clearly losing. And what's worse now is that Jesus is claiming to be the Son of God. And you take that and then you couple that with his wife's admonition and you have this supernatural dread creeping up on Pilate along with the natural dread that's rising up in him because of the Jews and things are starting to turn really bad for Pilate. But lest you feel sympathetic toward him, remember he's just had Jesus scourged even though he knows he is completely innocent. So

he decides he's going to have to re-interview Jesus and in verse 9 it says: *He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?"* It sounds brave but this is the sound of a person who's in deep panic. He's desperate to find out more about this Jesus and Jesus will have none of it. So Pilate tries bravado claiming he has the authority to release or crucify Jesus. And Jesus who's been savaged to near death by the flogging, he's completely unmoved. Verse 11 says: *Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."* So here's Jesus, he's affirming Pilate's authority and he's confirming that he poses no threat whatsoever to either Pilate or Rome and now Pilate begins actively seeking, trying to release Jesus because he's afraid, but his attempt to release Jesus is now met with a devastating blow by the religious leaders. This is verse 12, it says: *From then on Pilate sought to release him but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."* Now don't think for a second that the irony of this statement by the Jews, that it escapes Pilate. Pilate knows for a fact how deeply the Jews detest Rome, how much they hated Caesar and he had to have been stunned to

see the depth to which they would sink in order to remove Jesus from the face of the earth. And so the Jews flat out tell Pilate if he releases Jesus that they somehow or other are going to communicate to Caesar that Pilate is no friend of Caesar's because he's siding with an insurrectionist. I mean essentially the Jews escalate this battle of words to the place where Pilate now has to fear for his own life. And so at this point an enraged and a clearly outfoxed Pilate who is a coward turns a completely innocent Jesus over to a baying mob to be crucified.

As the elders come forward to distribute the bread, I just want us to take a moment at this time to ask God's Holy Spirit to open up our ability to grasp just how far Jesus was willing to go in humbling himself and becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross for us. The greatest and most powerful person who ever walked the planet is being spit on, he's being mocked, he's being spit on and mocked for daring to claim to be precisely who he is: a real king of a real kingdom worthy of real worship.

And as the bread is being distributed, I want to again continue with God's warning which he says in *1 Corinthians 11*, he 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. Now I say this every month.*

Basically what I'm trying to plead with you to tell you is that communion is an extremely serious undertaking and that to enter into it in an unworthy manner is to court disaster. Basically what I'm saying is if you're not confident that you are a child of the King, if you're not confident that you are bought by the blood of Christ and by faith that you are standing before God sinless because of what he's done and not what you've done, then don't participate in the elements. It's that serious. But on the other hand, I often also have to make the case that you can make the mistake of going on the other side too far and thinking that unless you're spotlessly perfect you're not worthy to receive communion and the devil loves that as well. See, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you're sinless. It means that you understand that when you do fall, that when you fail, that you understand that your salvation is a gift that you have been given and that it's never capable of being earned by being good and that you are made righteous in Christ, not by what you do. And it means that when you do fail, you understand that you've sinned because you have God's Spirit inside you, God's Holy Spirit convicting you of those sins, and so you grieve, you grieve as God's child and you know

that God longs to forgive you and cleanse you.

God says in *1 John 1:9*: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So just to address the other side, being a child of the King doesn't mean you're sinless, it means that you understand that when you do sin, you have an advocate with the Father who is speaking right now on your behalf. *1 John 2:1* says: *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.* See, it's only because we have the righteousness of Christ and not our own that we are free to eat from his table. So if you love your Lord, then don't deny yourself the privilege that Christ purchased for you at the price of his own blood. He lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserve to die in our place so that we could have this privilege of appearing before his table. So I want us to just take a moment this morning to focus in on the events that are taking place and on the astounding humility of Christ, that he would enable these monstrous people to do these monstrous things to him because he loved us.

*1 Corinthians* the 11th chapter 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.*

So we pick up on Pilate. He's presenting a beaten, bloodied Jesus to the crowd. This is the crowd's response: *When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him."* See what God is doing is through Pilate, his unwitting herald, he's stating three separate times that Jesus is indeed guiltless. God through Pilate is putting the sinless, guiltless, perfect One on display for the universe. He's also putting him on display in front of Satan. You see, Satan thought he had won this final battle in this war against God, I mean, after all, the Son of God is about to be executed. And so we asked last time was it Satan the one who was behind the viciousness of what's taking place here, behind the mockery, behind the elaborate reconstruction of mock worship with a purple robe, a crown of thorns and a scepter, all showing some kind of false worship, was this a mockery of the real worship that only Jesus was entitled to? And I think the answer is obvious that Satan was indeed behind this and that Pilate was his unwitting dupe. But you know Pilate is every man, and Pilate on his own, with his own resources, he thought he could outfox, he thought he could out dual

the religious leaders. And maybe he could have, but Satan himself acting in concert with the religious leaders made it a fight he couldn't possibly win. You see, ever since Satan has his first confrontation with Jesus in the desert, this was three years previously, we know Satan has been waiting for this precise moment. Scripture tells us that he is a roaring lion and he's constantly looking for souls to devour. And like a lion, he knows how to patiently stalk. So he, too, starts out slowly and he starts working on the religious leaders. And at first they find Jesus simply an annoyance. But when every encounter they had with him ends badly for them, they begin to feel the sting of resentment towards this unauthorized religious leader. And so Satan does every single thing he can to fan the flames of resentment when people begin to be attracted to Jesus. Things begin to go from bad to worse when the crowds begin flocking to Jesus. The religious leaders begin to hear the echo of Satan in their ears constantly telling them that this nobody, this illegitimate son of a carpenter was making them look like fools and he was threatening to take away their religious authority. And so soon the arguments grow more and more personal and the attacks grow more and more pointed as Jesus' fame grows and grows. You see for three years this lion was stalking the life of Jesus. And now this three-year stalk of the lion is coming to an end and it's exploding into action. He's fully engaged in the attack. Satan has so inflamed these religious

leaders that even though they're looking at a beaten, broken, flogged Jesus, they are so filled with rage that all they can say is, "Crucify him!"

You know, I was struck by the reference to lions that Matt Chandler made when we were down at the conference in Kentucky, the T4G conference, and he was talking about what he oftentimes does when he has to write when he has a deadline, he likes to isolate himself, go out someplace rural into the woods to try to meet the deadlines and he was describing one evening when he was just relaxing and he decided to watch television. And so happens he watched a show that I always watched as well and I confess I do watch television on occasion, my wife will attest. I think in the last ten years I don't ever -- I've never seen a television drama. I have no intention of ever seeing a television drama because they're just so incredibly awful, just morally I mean for me, but I watch science shows, engineering shows, Alaska shows, stupid shows, swamp shows, that kind of stuff. But one show that I was watching on *Animal Planet*, I don't know if you've ever heard it, it's called "When Animals Attack." It's about when animals attack. And so it so happens that Matt Chandler was watching that very same show and he was supposed to be writing his book but he was watching the show and he described one segment of the show which involved this svelte model for a shampoo company and she's posing by seductively sitting

with a fully grown lion. And so they're filming this commercial and for some reason or another the lion just got up and turned on the woman and chewed her up rather thoroughly. And so Matt shared his amazement at the trainer who had raised this lion from a cub, that he was incredulous and he was incredulous that this animal had so suddenly turned. And as Matt put it, he was incredulous that this apex predator actually started acting like an apex predator. And he noted how much like sin this lion is. He said, you know we take in sin and we feed it and we coddle it, and because it lies there quietly we think somehow or other that it's tame, that it's not dangerous, but all it takes is the right circumstances and the right moves and this apex predator begins to act once again like an apex predator.

Now there is no higher apex predator than Satan and sin is the lion that he sends to every single one of us. But here's how he does it. You see, it often arrives as cute, cuddly cubs. It's often quite willing to lie down and appear tame while we coddle it and feed it and provide for it. And because sin is so incredibly patient, so willing to lie down and play dead, we can think like that model did, that somehow this apex predator is safe. And yet given the opportunity it will rise up and devour you. It truly showed its true colors that day when Jesus is brought out to the people. I mean you just think about this, just think about what

common decency would dictate, I mean, it would dictate that a broken, bloodied Jesus who everybody knows did nothing but good his entire life, that he was no threat to anyone. And yet instead of stirring compassion, as Pilate thought that he would, it did exactly what the lion expected it to do. It made them even more bloodthirsty for the death of God's own Son. Even 2,000 years later we're shocked at the level of viciousness and heartlessness involved. But there was one person who was not shocked at all. There was only one person in the entire passion of Christ who knew exactly what was going on at every single level, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ. The religious leaders really, they had no idea what the enemy had nurtured in them, this bitter fear and hatred they had for the one true God who was standing directly in front of them. They had no idea that the god they were actually serving was Satan and that when the time was appropriate, he would whip them into such a frenzy that they would demand to crucify the one true God.

Now if you go back a few chapters in the gospel of John, you can encounter a statement that Jesus made about Satan that proved that Jesus alone understood this lion. This is a warning that Jesus gave back in *John 14*. He is warning his disciples about the crucifixion, and this is what he says, he says: "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world*

*gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me." There's no other human being in the entire world who could ever make that statement about the prince of this world. "He has no hold over me." Understand what God tells us about mankind. He says in 1 John 5:19: We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. When Jesus says of his enemy "he has no hold over me," he's pointing out that because Christ was completely sinless, he could not only challenge his contemporaries to find him guilty of a single sin, he could also challenge Satan as well.*

*Satan had no hold over the sinless Jesus but it wasn't for want of trying or for a willingness on Jesus' part to be tested for us. You see, for Jesus to truly represent us as our high priest, he had to be subject to the exact same temptations that we are. Hebrews 2:17 says: Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he*

*is able to help those who are being tempted. So because of that, because Jesus needed to have that same experience, his time on earth was bracketed at the very beginning and at the end with a confrontation with the lion, with the prince of this world, and it centered around temptation. This is the very beginning of Christ's public ministry. And scripture says he was driven out into the desert for a confrontation with the devil. This is Matthew 4, says: Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to a holy city and set him on a pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"*

I want you to notice here that Satan loves to quote scripture. He loves to quote scripture when it benefits him. I mean *"it is written,"* that's what Satan said and it's his appeal to the authority of scripture. In verse 7, it says: *Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the*

test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him. See Jesus went out to the desert to experience the very same temptations we all experience but to do so successfully. He went there to prove the prince of this world had no hold on him.

Russell Moore in his book *Tempted and Tried* points out three areas that Jesus was tempted in. First he was tempted to consume. I mean he was tempted to turn the stones into bread, and for us our temptation is to turn whatever into dollars or power or popularity then to spend the rest of our life, the rest of our energy pursuing those things. Jesus resisted that temptation by going to the word of God. He says, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" And secondly he was tempted to protect himself. "Throw yourself down!" "The angels will protect you!" Well for us that temptation is just as real. It's to value myself above others and to seek my own protection at the cost of others. And Jesus resisted that as well and he did it again by going back to the scripture. "Again it is

written, "'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Well the third temptation was the temptation to self-exaltation. That's our temptation as well, too. We have within us the desire to be our own little gods, and Jesus once again resisted that temptation the way he resisted all the others, by going back to the word of God. *"Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"* So three times Jesus is tempted and three times he says, *"It is written," "It is written," "It is written."*

Now we can't begin to examine the depth of what this epic battle between God and the lion was all about, we just don't have the time, but suffice it to say Jesus' response to all the temptations was God and his word. And when the devil saw that he had no hold whatsoever on Jesus, he left. Well it's now three years later, the cross is unfolding and he's back. His minions are doing a great job of whipping the crowd into a frenzy demanding Jesus' crucifixion and all the while they have convinced themselves that they are serving God. That's the lion at work. I mean what better way to devour someone than to have them think it's not even the case, it's not even happening, they're not even aware of what's going on.

As the elders begin to distribute the cup, I want you to consider a

statement that Satan made during the desert temptation that bears on what Jesus is going through and what we have to deal with every single day. The statement is better made in Luke's account of the same incident that I just read to you. If you remember, Satan had taken Jesus up to the highest point and he shows him all of the kingdoms of the world, he shows them all in space and time, probably showed him the year 2016. But this is what Satan said to Jesus, he says: *"To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."* See, if you want proof that the prince of this world really is who Jesus says he is, this is your proof. Listen to what he says again. He says: *"To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I will."* There's no better explanation for the state of this world than that one. The prince of this world, the lion, is the ruler of this world and every one of us have been given by this prince a whole litter of little baby lion cubs that we can grow and nurture and pet and coddle while they patiently wait to devour us. Or we can throw our lot in with our champion who was willing to take on this fully grown lion and use all of his tricks and all of his viciousness and all of his cunning as the very means to destroy him. You see, God through Christ used the power of the cross to provide forgiveness for every single one of his sheep. And by

paying the price of our sin on the cross, Jesus took from Satan the only power that he has over us. You know what that power is? The power that he has over us is the power to accuse. Satan's name means "accuser" and it's our sin that gives him that power. It's our sin that gives him the power to accuse. A perfect God cannot abide sin, and so the ruler of this world makes it his business to lock all of us up in sin so that he can successfully accuse us. But Christ who he thought he was destroying was actually destroying the one power that Satan had over us by taking on our sin so that Satan could no longer accuse us. God puts it this way in *Colossians 2:13*. He says: *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* You see, the priest and the leaders as well as the crowd that Satan had effectively used to ensure that Jesus would die on the cross, they were unaware that they were also being used by God to knock out the teeth of the lion that all of us have pursuing us. Three days later when Jesus rose from the dead, Satan finally realized that when it came to believers in Jesus Christ, the sin that Satan used to accuse us with had been dealt with on the cross, that it was now paid in full and that this lion

is now toothless. Consider what Jesus has gone through for us. He took on the greatest monster the world has ever known, and without lifting a finger in his defense, he rendered him toothless, powerless. Take a moment to thank him.

*1 Corinthians the 11th chapter, the 25th verse 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.*

We now are doing our heart, hands and feet which is basically where we try to come up with a practical application of just what it means to remember Christ, and I want to tell you a story. This is a story from scripture. I came across it in the readings recently. This is from 2 Kings. Samaria was under siege, people were starving, people were dying, and there's four lepers that are getting together and they're trying to figure out what to do with their fate. Let me just read to you what happens. This is 2 Kings 7, it says: *Now there were four men who were lepers at the entrance to the gate. And they said to one another, "Why are we sitting here until we die? If we say, 'Let us enter the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. So now come, let us go over to the camp of the Syrians. If they spare our lives we shall live, and if they kill*

*us we shall but die." So they arose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians. But when they came to the edge of the camp of the Syrians, behold, there was no one there. For the Lord had made the army of the Syrians hear the sound of chariots and of horses, the sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, "Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to come against us." So they fled away in the twilight and abandoned their tents, their horses, and their donkeys, leaving the camp as it was, and fled for their lives. And when these lepers came to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent and ate and drank, and they carried off silver and gold and clothing and went and hid them. Then they came back and entered another tent and carried off things from it and went and hid them. Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come; let us go and tell the king's household."*

What I was struck by with this story is it's describing four outcasts, four lepers, four people who have absolutely nothing, they have nothing physically, they're diseased, they have nothing in terms of food or of clothing or of riches or of anything. And so they're saying we're dead, we're dead people anyway, so why not go to the Syrians and if they kill us, they kill us; if not, we can

get some food from them. So they go with nothing and they come across this incredible treasure. And there's treasure beyond their wildest dream, there's food aplenty, there's drink aplenty, there's gold, there's clothing, there's all kinds of things and you can imagine their glee as they're just plundering all of these tents and they're grabbing up handfuls of stuff and they're taking it away and they're burying it and they're coming back for another load, they're doing this, and as they're doing it, they're saying, wait a minute, wait a minute, our brothers and sisters are back there starving, they've got nothing, and look what we're doing. And I was struck by the fact that these lepers represent earthly treasures and in essence we were the lepers who have discovered a treasure much, much greater than what they discovered. We discovered the key to everlasting life. We discovered the key to ruling the universe with Christ forever. We discovered the key to why we're here, what we're doing here, what God's going to do with our lives for the rest of our lives, all of that has fallen into our laps as it were. It belongs to us. And I just wonder if you had something as wonderful as this happen to you, don't you feel some kind of sense that my friends, my neighbors, the people that I work with, the people that I rub shoulders with, they're starving, they're diseased, they're leprous, they're dying, and I've got the riches of the universe. And I just go back to what they said, *"We're not doing right. If today is a day of good news and if*

*we're silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us."* And I flashed immediately to Paul's words. Paul at the very end of his ministry in Acts 20, he's saying his good-byes and one of the things that he says to the elders, he says:

*"Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all" and then he says why: "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God."*

And so my challenge for us this morning is basically the same challenge I give each Sunday. We are evangelicals. We've been given the greatest treasure the universe will ever know. 100,000 years from now you'll look back to this day, I can look back 100,000 years from now and say remember I said that? Now you realize what you've been given. You're going to rule the universe. You're surrounded by people who are dying. They're going to an eternity without Christ. God says you are blessed to be a blessing. The reason he blessed you is so that you could go out and share it, and so I exhort you today to share it. And that doesn't mean -- I sense that people are just afraid, I don't know what I'm going to say, and all I'm asking you to do is pray that God would give you opportunity and be willing to take the opportunity that God gives you. You know it may be saying I was lost and now I'm found. Jesus is the way. End of story. You don't have to give a dissertation theologically, you have to be

willing to let God's Holy Spirit speak with you and share the treasure you found. Let's pray.

*Father, I just thank you for the treasure that we have. I thank you that you through your Son went against the monster, the lion that devours souls. I thank you that he knocked out the teeth of that lion, that he took away from him the ability to accuse by paying the full price of our sin. I praise you and thank you for that, and I pray, Lord, that you would give us a passion to share that story, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*