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

**August 7, 2022**

**Communion Sunday**

**Mark 9:9-37**

**Prayer:** *I just want to again offer up a word of prayer this morning and thanks just for the fact that we have a place where we can gather. What a blessing, what a blessing this is, Lord. Father, I just want to thank you this day and I want to praise you for giving us your Son, for giving us the gift of your Son. I pray, Lord, as we again enter into this sacred time, this time where we are focused on your cross and what you've done for us that you would give us the ability to open up our eyes, open up our ears, be able to hear what it is you're saying to us. Again, Lord, I just pray you would give us the ability by your Holy Spirit's power to make this of permanent value. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, this is the day as you all know that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and there for the last time he celebrated a Passover supper with them. It's recorded in *Matthew 26*, which says this, 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."*

So Jesus took bread and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood, then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. Then he asked them to repeat the remembrance of this sacrifice on a regular basis, and this is what we call "the Lord's table." And we examine the Lord's table by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us, by examining ourselves, asking God's Holy Spirit to point out areas where he is convicting us of sin, and then by confessing our sins. Jesus said in *John 6:53*: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Well, we're following the life of Jesus Christ in the gospel of Mark and we've seen Jesus encountered many, many different forms, many, many different forms of demonic opposition. He faced sickness, oppression, the jealousy of the Pharisees, the

indifference of the many who followed him simply for the free food and to watch the miracles unfold. But this time we're going to focus on one of the most frustrating things that Jesus had to deal with and that was the spiritual dullness of his disciples.

You've got to set the stage right now. Jesus is entering into the final phase of his teaching ministry with his disciples and so he's pulling back from the crowds, he's taking his disciples now to private places where his instruction is growing more intense, more personal, more specific because he knows that his time is running short. Heaven itself is preparing for the final assault on Satan's kingdom that this cross represented. The great battle was about to take place, and it all started back in the Garden of Eden. And it started when Satan had tempted Adam and Eve into defying God by eating from the one tree that God said not to. When Adam fell, he voluntarily gave up his perfection by eating that forbidden fruit and he so drastically changed his nature that he could no longer fellowship with a perfect creator. This disaster didn't just fall on Adam but it fell as well on every one of his offspring. And from that moment of rebellion on, Satan could claim every single one of us because the imperfection that Adam invited became part of his very being, something that was passed on to every one of his offspring, including you and me, something that we call "original sin."

*Romans 5:12* says: *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.* And because of that one man's sin, because of that one man's sin we all lacked the perfection necessary to coexist with a perfect God. But God so loved his fallen creation that he was willing to become one of us, to then live out the life that we were supposed to live and to live it flawlessly and to take that flawless divine slash human life to a cross and offer it up as payment to his own perfect sense of justice, enabling him to extend to us not only his perfect justice but his perfect mercy as well. The God of perfect justice would soundly condemn every and all sin that fell short of his glory, but the God of perfect mercy would also pay the full penalty of that condemnation by absorbing the death sentence on behalf of every one of his sheep at the cross.

And the stakes in this battle, they could not have been higher. So if Jesus failed to offer himself up for us perfectly, he would have remained in the ground, all would have been lost. As Paul put it in *1 Corinthians 15*, he said: *If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.* Satan and Jesus knew that the site of the final battle was coming ever closer and Jesus was now

determined to prepare his disciples as best he could. Yet it seems that that task proved far more difficult than even Jesus anticipated.

For three years now Jesus has been instructing his disciples, preaching the gospel, announcing that the kingdom of God has arrived, and that kingdom was going to be won or lost outside of Jerusalem where Jesus would offer his life up on a cross. And now as his public ministry is winding to an end, Jesus takes Peter and James and John, he takes them up to a mountaintop to receive one final encouragement from the Father, the Holy Spirit, and two of the prophets from the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah. Well the disciples up on that mountain, they witnessed this final briefing between the Father, the Son and two of the patriarchs prior to the final battle, and at the age of 33 Jesus is about to give up his life on a cross. The God who created the entire universe is now set to have creatures that he created out of nothing and who rebelled and now hate his presence, God's going to allow those very creatures to offer him up in order to pay the sin debt of the sheep that he's rescuing. They're going to beat him, they're going to mock him, they're going to flog him, they're going to strip him and crucify him thinking that he's a rebel nobody, someone who needs to be taught a lesson.

Well, the Roman soldiers think they're conducting a routine execution, unaware that they are participating in the greatest battle in the history of the universe. They have no idea that they are mere pawns assisting in a battle between Jesus and Satan. Up on that mountaintop Moses and Elijah, they appear to Jesus to comfort and encourage him about this impending trial he's about to undergo. And on the way back down the mountain, Jesus tells Peter, James and John to say nothing of what they've seen until after he's risen from the dead. And as I pointed out the last time, the disciples hear this and they don't know how to respond. I mean because even though they've heard from Jesus himself exactly what was going to happen, they don't understand at all what this resurrection is all about.

We pick up on *Mark 9*. It says: *And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean.* I would call that strike one. I mean Jesus strictly told them to say nothing of it because he didn't want anything to interfere with the chosen moment of the cross. And I will say to that, they held true, they did keep the matter to themselves, but then it says they questioned what this -- quote -- "rising from the dead" might mean. Well Jesus had already explained in depth exactly what it would

mean. I mean if you go back one chapter to *Mark 8:31*, it says -- quote -- "*And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.* Jesus wasn't speaking in parables, I mean in fact he was painfully blunt. *Mark 8:32* says: *And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.* I mean so much of what Jesus told the disciples was a complete mystery to them. And Jesus knew that much of it would remain a mystery until his Holy Spirit descended on them, opening their eyes, their minds, their spirits, connecting the dots to all of those things that Jesus had taught them while he was still with him. And in the disciples' case I'm sure it was a matter of not wanting to hear news as awful as the news that Jesus was bearing. I mean it was so awful that they could not or would not process it.

And some of the responsibility lies in the way we listen and in the way we hear. Paul Simon said it well in one of his songs. It's from *The Boxer*, it states -- quote -- "*All lies in jest, still a man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest.*" I mean three different times well before the event the disciples chose to hear what they wanted to hear and disregard the rest. Jesus had told the disciples that he was going to be betrayed, he was going to be arrested, he was going to be crucified and that he would rise

again from the dead, and yet it always went in one ear and out the other. And again, some of that was really not their fault, I mean, God kept them from a full understanding of what would take place until after the resurrection when God sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter to instruct them fully. And this is what Jesus said in *John 14*. He said: *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. But you know just because you don't have the whole complete picture doesn't mean you're not responsible for the information that's been conveyed to you. And there's no doubt that Jesus over and over again grew frustrated with the disciples' dullness of hearing.*

And there's one particular instance that stands out. If you recall, Jesus is explaining to Thomas that he was leaving them. And during this explanation Philip comes up with what is perhaps the worst possible response someone could ever come up with. This is *John 14*, it says: *Jesus said to him -- now, Jesus is speaking to Thomas at this point -- and Jesus says: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."* Philip said to him, "Lord,



*show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

I mean Jesus' frustration is obvious. After three years of doing nothing but demonstrating that he was here to show the world the Father's love, the Father's way, the Father's plan, he's telling them repeatedly what he said in *John 5*, he said: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise."* And then in *John 6* he said: *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. In John 10: "I and the Father are one."* In *John 14: "But I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father."*

After three full years of this, Philip says, Jesus, why don't you just show us the Father? I mean I doubt Philip realized how incredibly insulting his statement was, but Jesus' response makes it certain that he felt the sting of it. I mean he asked the disciples, he says: *"Have I been with you so long,"* and he's using the plural for you so that he can refer to all of them. But then he switches to the singular for you and he addresses Philip. He

says: "And you? You still don't know me Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" I mean I know if I was Philip I'd be looking for a crack in the floor that I could crawl out through. God has just said the equivalent to him of, "Are you kidding me, Philip?"

But before we castigate Philip, we have to examine our own dullness of hearing. And so we pick up on this story, and Jesus is coming down from this mountaintop along with Peter, James and John and he encounters the disciples and they're in the midst of this vehement argument with the crowd. Jesus quickly discerns that it's over a young boy who's been demon possessed and the boy's father has brought the young boy to the disciples and he's begging them to cast this demon out. Now the disciples have freshly returned from their first practical exam and it was a mission trip where 72 of them had all gone out and had successfully done battle even with demons. And so flushed with success the disciples confidently weigh in to the battle, praying for the demon to come out only to have their efforts fail spectacularly. Well that was strike two.

So Jesus comes down from this mountaintop experience to find his disciples verbally battling with this crowd that had witnessed their failure at casting out a demon. And Jesus is clearly frustrated that after three years of intense training the

disciples, they're still clueless. We have Matthew's account of the very same thing which expands on that and it demonstrates why Jesus seemed so frustrated, so much so that this is what he said to the crowd and the father and the boy: *"O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me."*

Jesus seems to have lost it. He seems to have lost it at the disciples' inability to heal this young boy. I mean this is one of those scriptures where you actually picture Jesus doing one of those kind of face plants. It's not because the disciples had made a mistake, it's not because they've gone about this exorcism improperly, I mean, Jesus never castigates honest mistakes. What frustrated Jesus no end was that he had made it clear or it was made very clear in the very account that was recorded in Matthew's gospel. Matthew describes it this way, says: *The disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith."* See, it wasn't improper technique that frustrated Jesus, it was the fact that they were now at the end of his public ministry and they were still so clueless when it came to faith. I mean they had spent three years with Jesus watching over them all of the time and yet still when push came to shove, instead of doubling their efforts in prayer, instead of trusting that Christ was still in charge, they just

threw up their hands and said, oh, we can't do this. Their lack of faith is what upset the Master. In fact you could almost say this young boy's father had far more faith than his disciples. At least he said, *"I believe, help thou my unbelief."*

So Jesus vents his frustration with his disciples, saying to them once again, he says: *"For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."* What Jesus is actually castigating them and everyone else about was their reliance on their own abilities rather than relying on the supernatural ability of God. Jesus was acknowledging, this is a demon of very high rank, this is not a demon that's going to come out easily like the other demons had come out when the disciples had fanned out from town to town. Quote -- *And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."*

But Jesus then proceeds to treat this incredibly powerful demon -- like I said before, as if it's nothing more than some loathsome insect, which to Jesus he was. Notice Jesus didn't pray and fast to remove him, he simply ordered him out and out he went. That's not how it worked for the disciples. And when it was obvious that their efforts weren't working, they just gave up. And what Jesus

was disappointed in with the disciples was their inability or their unwillingness to learn how to lock into the power that comes through prayer. And again as I point out, we're at the end of Jesus' three years of ministry with the disciples, we're not at the beginning, we're not at the middle and there seems to be such valuable lessons that they haven't quite mastered yet.

And shortly thereafter we come to strike number three. This is *Mark 9:30*. It says: *They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.*

Well how blunt do you have to be? I'm still astounded by the accounts of the crucifixion that try to paint Jesus as some poor hapless victim of a kangaroo court who just got railroaded into a crucifixion. I mean, after all this is Jesus' third time on record bluntly and specifically telling the disciples exactly what was going to take place well ahead of the actual event. It says they didn't understand him. But it also says they were afraid to ask.

Why would you be afraid to ask? How many times have you heard

someone speaking to you something you either didn't want to hear or didn't care to hear? And before you know it, he or she is looking just like Charlie Brown, he's opening his mouth and what's coming out? Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, right? That's probably happening to me right now with you guys. Meanwhile you realize this person just might want an accounting of what it is that he's saying to you and because you're no longer paying any attention, you're not able to give one; hence you're afraid to ask. Now have I ever been guilty of doing that with my wife? Yeah. I'd also say she's also very good at catching me going into my Charlie Brown mode. She will stop me right then and there and say, "You're not listening at all to what I'm saying, are you?" Well, sometimes I try to put together what pieces I've heard and try to make a cogent attempt at faking it, other times I'll just admit it. "Sorry, I wasn't listening," and then double my efforts to listen.

Like I said, there's usually two different reasons for a failure to pay attention. One is you don't want to hear it and the other is you don't care to hear it. Either way God can be speaking, we're just not listening. One way we fail to listen is by embracing the thought that God has shortchanged or ignored or forsaken us, that he's turned a blind eye and a deaf ear towards our cries to him for help. I mean how many times have we cried out like David did in *Psalm 13: How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long*

*will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?* Translation: You don't care at all about me, do you, God? You don't care what I'm going through or the pain that I'm in or how I've been wronged. Well, God speaks specifically about that over and over again in his words and sometimes instead of hearing it, we decide we either don't want to hear or care to hear what he's saying. I mean, you know what God says in *1 Peter 2*, he says: *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.* Now, you listen to what he's actually saying and you wonder how many friends do you have who would be willing to be crucified, crucified on your account?

God also says in *Colossians 2*: *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.* Again, how many friends do you have that even though they had no debts whatsoever would be willing to cancel any and all debts that you had by allowing themselves to be nailed to a cross? I mean in *Romans 8:32* God says: *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us*

*all things? Hear what God is saying, he's saying if I'm willing to give you my own beloved Son, do you not think I would give you everything and anything that was good for you and nothing that I thought would harm you? And when we think otherwise -- and all of us do that -- we're all embracing the same spiritual dullness the disciples embraced. Now, they had an excuse in that the comforter had not yet been given. So my question this morning is what is our excuse?*

*As we prepare to take the bread, just consider that. Any of you who do not have a communion kit, just raise your hand and the fellows will make sure that you get one. We're looking at 1 Corinthians 11:28 which says: But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.*

*And as I say each time, I say communion is extremely serious business and to enter into communion in an unworthy manner as to literally court disaster. I plead with you, if you're not absolutely confident that you're a child of the King, if you*



haven't by faith trusted in Christ as your savior, or if you first need to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you bring your sacrifice, what your sacrifice is you, before you bring your sacrifice to the altar, then just don't participate. If you don't feel right about participating, err on the side of caution and get right with God first.

But I also say on the other hand, you can make the mistake of thinking that unless you're spotlessly perfect you're unworthy to receive communion, and the devil loves that mistake as well. See, being a child of the King doesn't mean you don't sin, it doesn't mean you don't fail, it doesn't mean you don't fall, it means that you recognize that your salvation is a gift that no one is ever capable of earning by being good. And so we quote again as we do each month Dane Ortlund's wise words: "In the kingdom of God the one thing that qualifies you is knowing you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." And you know, it also means when we do fail we are aware that we've sinned and the reason why is because we have the Spirit of God within us convicting us, and so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive us and cleanse us, who 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 doesn't mean we are without sin, it means that when we sin, we recognize there's somebody in heaven right now, an advocate speaking on our behalf. *1 John 2* 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 because we have Jesus' righteousness and not our own, it's a foreign righteousness but it belongs to us, and because we have that righteousness, we are free to eat from his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased for you. As we've said, he lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so that we could be made worthy of heaven. And so as we're about to take of the bread, I just want to ask ourself this morning, where is my faith this morning? Have I, too, become dull of hearing?

*1 Corinthians 11:23* says: *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* So take, and eat.

Well as I said, the disciples were dull of hearing for the same reason that we are dull of hearing. They didn't want to hear what

was being said. I mean, the disciples most definitely did not want to hear that their Lord and Master was soon going to be publicly executed on a criminal's cross. And a significant reason why they didn't hear Jesus when he warned them was because they loved him and they could not imagine such a fate befalling him. There was also another side, a not so quite beautiful side to their thinking. Jesus was their meal ticket. His kingdom would usher in a whole new way of life for all of the disciples. I mean Jesus had spoken all along about ushering in this new kingdom and he opened up chapter 9 with these words, it says: *And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."*

Do you blame the disciples? They couldn't help but think the kingdom was going to have all kinds of earthly benefits for them, that after three years of wandering itinerant training, one day they'd be in a position to enjoy this kingdom of heaven on earth. They were stunningly mistaken. And the very next incident that takes place illustrates that. I would say this is strike four. It says: *And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.* Now you have to understand, this event occurred right after Jesus had told them for the third time that he was

going to be publicly executed on a cross. They didn't listen because they didn't want to hear but their care and their concern for their savior, it only went so far. One can only guess what the motive was for the discussion that followed but we know it was all about rank. We know they were all arguing about who was going to be the "big cheese" in the coming kingdom. We also know they had the good sense to be shamed into silence when Jesus called them to account for the discussion that they were having. And it's here as we read between the lines that we see again the beauty, the beauty of Jesus' character. Here's Jesus, he's at the end of his three-year public ministry having poured himself into the disciples, encountering in them a selfishness and a self-centeredness that could easily put a lesser being so far off that he would utterly reject these ignorant ambitious posers. But that's not who Jesus is. It says: *And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."*

So here's the actual king of the universe doing exactly what he's instructing his disciples about. The most powerful, the most glorious creator and sustainer of all things is about to embrace the essence of what it means to reject being first and embrace being last. Instead of honor he's about to embrace shame, including the shame of being stripped naked and being nailed to a

cross. Instead of glory, he will embrace disgrace, the disgrace of being treated as the lowest of common criminals. Instead of power he's going to embrace weakness, the utter weakness of being a sheep led to the slaughter. That's precisely what Jesus knew awaited him shortly, along with the fact that every one of these men that he was speaking with would desert him at his greatest hour of need. So what does Jesus do? Well, it says: *And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."* You know it seems that Jesus always had children around him. What we're reading here is in this case Jesus takes a little one apparently he kind of puts his arms around him, then he stands him in the midst of the disciples, then he kind of bends over and he picks him up and he holds this little one in his arms and while he's holding him in his arms, he says: *"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me."* So we ask, okay, why a child? Well, Matthew's version of this same incident expands a bit on what Jesus had said. *And he said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me."*

All right. So what is it about a child that's so necessary to entering the kingdom of God? Well, for one, a child is absolutely powerless. A child can do nothing on his own to secure his future. A child has no choice but to trust in his parents. And so, too, an unbeliever can do nothing on his own. He lacks the ability and the will to become worthy of God on his own. He has no choice but to trust in his heavenly Father, that he has provided a means to establish his righteousness, his worthiness before God, and that's exactly what the cross was designed to provide.

You know, one of the greatest stumbling blocks to entering the kingdom is the very notion that you can't do this on your own, the very notion that your goodness is not good enough, because it falls short of God's perfection and that only God's goodness is going to suffice. That goodness was won by God at his resurrection and it's offered to anyone who by faith seeks God.

The second thing about the child is the way that they believe. Jesus says humbly, that is without pretense. That's without any other baggage other than simple childlike faith. You know, children come by that naturally. It's we adults, we're the ones who have to work at it. Sometimes we have to fight and claw and scratch in order to crawl back to childlike faith. But childlike faith is exactly what is required.

Now in chapter 10 we come across another instance of the disciples not getting, I would say this is strike five. This is *Mark 10*. It says: *And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant -- and that word is more than just a -- he was angry, Jesus was angry -- and he said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."* And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

Okay, so how do we receive the kingdom like a child? Well, in one particular way we foster and we nurture one particularly childlike attribute and that's a sense of amazement. It's what caused John Newton to say, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see." It's what caused Charles Wesley to say, "Amazing love, how can it be, that thou my God shouldst die for me?" One thing that marks out the difference between genuine faith and mere belief is a sense of absolute amazement that God would save a wretch like me, a childlike quality that's astounded, speechless and stammering at what God has done for me. I mean, does that description ever struck home with you? It should. See, our spiritual ears are no different than the disciples' were and they tend to grow more and

more dull unless active steps are taken to keep them alive and well and what we're participating right in right here, right now is one of those steps.

So as we take of the cup, I would ask you to ask God to open up in you a spirit of amazement at what he's done for you. Just take the cup and think for a moment. *1 Corinthians 11:25* says: *In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."* So take, and drink.

This is the part where we kind of reflect. I call it hands, heart and feet, where we try to come up with some practical understanding of just what it is we're talking about with regard to remembering the Lord Jesus Christ. And so I want to talk about a word, the word is "doxology." And if you hear the word doxology, immediately you think of the hymn that we sing each time at the end of our worship service. But doxology, the doxology is not a hymn, it's actually a form of worship. It's a type that spontaneously overflows from that sense of amazement at the character and attributes of God. There's all kinds of doxologies in scripture, and every time you come across one, it's as if the writer of scripture suddenly switches gears to express how stunned and how wonderful it is that God's love and mercy has been poured out on



him. This is one of Paul's doxologies from *Romans 11*. He's writing on the doctrine of election and it's very thick and suddenly he stops and he switches gears and he says: *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*

So this morning I would like each of us to take a moment and I would ask us to construct a mini doxology of your own. It involves thinking back to just what the cross entailed, on the ways that God has answered prayer in your life, all the blessings that he has given you, all of the challenges that he's helped you face, and the focus here is on God alone and what he has done. So just take a moment and ask God's Holy Spirit to bring to mind those things he's done in your life and pray out your own personal doxology. Let's pray.

*Father, I just praise you and thank you for who you are. I just praise you and thank you for the gifts that you've brought to us, the unthinkable, unimaginable, unfathomable gift of God himself becoming one of us, of God himself being willing to be nailed to a*

*tree in order to rescue and ransom his own. I praise you, I thank you, I bless you, I glorify you in all these, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*