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

**November 17, 2019**

**Godliness**

**2 Peter 1:5-7**

**Prayer:** *Father, we just again, we are so thankful for the fact that we can praise you. We are so thankful for the little ones and the enthusiasm. Lord, just again we want to be enthusiastic about the gifts that you've given to us, the gift of your Son, the gift of the cross, the gift of your word. And Lord, we are still in the process of unpacking that gift this morning. And again, as we do that, we pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, that you'd be guiding us into truth, that that truth would be of permanent value, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we are still working our way through the scripture in 2 Peter 1:5-7. Let me just read it to you. It says: *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. So far we've covered goodness, knowledge, self-control and perseverance. And we've seen that those are qualities that add up to an effective*

and productive life for Jesus Christ.

And this morning we want to look at what is perhaps the most important and maybe the most misunderstood attribute that Peter says we are to cultivate, and that is godliness. What does the word "godliness" conjure up in your mind? I mean is it someone who's always quoting scripture, someone who's always speaking in theological terms or maybe you think it's somebody who is very soft-spoken, somebody who's very kind. What do you think of when you think of a godly man or a woman? Well, no matter what your image is, chances are it's not what Peter is speaking about here when Peter says, "*make every effort to add to your faith godliness.*" See, the actual Greek term is the word "eusebeia" and it means "piety." *Vines Expository Dictionary* describes it as "a piety characterized by a God ward attitude that does what is well pleasing to him." Maybe the simplest way to describe eusebeia is having a heart and a hunger for God. Another way to understand godliness is to really look at worldliness and just turn that upside down. A worldly person is someone who stakes his life on this world. A godly person is someone who stakes it all on God. So this morning we want to take an in depth look at godliness. We want to look at it from three different angles: We want to look at what it isn't, what it is, and then lastly, how do we get godliness.

So first let's look at what godliness is not. Well, the opposite of godly would be godless. And as Tim Keller points out there's more than one way to live a godless life, and there's the first way, the standard way is to live a life full of wickedness, full of wicked deeds. The other way is to live a life full of good deeds, thinking that those deeds are going to earn me the right to heaven. You see, a life of wickedness can make you a bitter foe of God. A life full of good deeds done for the wrong motive can make you something far worse. It can make you deaf and blind to the fact that you, too, are a bitter foe of God. See, Jesus's greatest enemies were folks who insisted that good deeds are what justifies you before God. It's no small irony that Jesus frequently argued with the religious leaders of his day about some of the things that you could say he was pretty much an expert on and that's who God really was, and what God expected of us. And so we read the biblical accounts in John 8 and 9 and they really paint a ridiculous picture, an absurd picture. We read these and we find the -- quote -- "good people," the "moral people" and they're arguing with Jesus about who God is. They're arguing with God himself about God's expectation for us. And in the course of the conversation Jesus tells them that they are enslaved to a works system of righteousness. And Jesus tells them that they could know the truth, the truth would set them free from that. And instead of welcoming the offer, they become offended, they insist that not

only were they not slaves but they've never been slaves. And the argument becomes heated. The Pharisees get outraged, so much so that the religious leaders wind up telling God himself that he's an illegitimate son and a demon-possessed Samaritan, two of the nastiest terms they could come up with. Well, Jesus responds by telling them that they have a severe hearing problem and he also tells them why. This is what he says in *John 8:47*. He says:

*"Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."* Now that's not an idle statement by a critic. Understand who is saying these words, this is God in the flesh, and he's telling the good people, he's telling the religious people, the ones who are certain of their moral excellence that not only were they deaf to the truth but they are outside the kingdom of God. The response shows just how bitter a foe moral people can become when their sin is pointed out. *John 8:48* it says: *The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that your are a Samaritan and have a demon?"* Those are not compliments.

As we continue to read, we find in the very next chapter we see Jesus healing a man born blind. And this too offends the religious leaders. They wind up throwing this recently healed man out of the temple. And *John 8* describes what happened. It says this: *Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do*

*you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'we see,' your guilt remains."* I mean Jesus is telling these -- quote -- "good people," the most moral and upright people of the day that they are uniquely blind and deaf, that they have a blindness that literally masquerades as sight. You see, the Pharisees thought they had cornered the market on godliness. See, they had organized their lives around godly living in a profoundly wicked culture. They genuinely believed that they were oppressed and enslaved by Rome because of Israel's wickedness. They also believed that their righteous living, their godliness would cause God to reward them with a Messiah who would overthrow Rome and put the good people back on top. Well, Jesus was an enormous threat to that idea. Keller points out that Jesus' threat was that he redefined the kingdom of God, and he defined it in a way that was nothing like what they had imagined. As Keller says, Jesus was not a person or power that they expected at all. He came in weakness and in love and in service, and he told them that the problem was

not really Rome, the problem was their own hearts. He also said that the kingdom of God was not a place where good people were in and bad people were out. Instead, he insisted it was a place where humble people were in and proud people were out. And that gospel was imminently threatening in Jesus' day, and it is just as threatening today because the humble are still in and the proud are still out.

So false godliness still finds this kingdom threatening, and all you need to create a climate where false godliness can flourish is a culture that's collapsing and a group of people who are determined to resist that decay. I mean I've said this many, many times but the devil has a playbook for whatever direction you want to go in. He's quite capable of transforming moral folks into proud folks before they even know it. Take your eyes off God and it is very easy to focus on a failing culture instead, and that is incredibly dangerous. See, Christian culture tends to focus on a negative standard of keeping its distance from the world instead of a positive standard of God and his word and that is incredibly dangerous. I remember years ago someone explained the danger this way, they said, this is the world, this is the world ten years ago with all of its wickedness and all of the bad stuff and this is the church and the church says, "Look how far we are from the world." World is right here, we're all the way over here. It's ten years

later, world's down here but now we're here. We're where we were ten years ago looking at how terrible that was. And that's what happens when you define yourself by keeping a distance from the world. You see, when you structure your life against the culture as opposed to toward God, it becomes very easy to start seeing yourself as good people compared to the culture. And when you structure your life towards God and his kingdom, you find it impossible to see yourself as anything other than a sinner saved by grace. You see, when I point my life towards God, I point it towards the absolute perfection of Jesus Christ. It is his standard of what goodness is. You see, what God identifies as good is nothing short of perfection. And what we identify as good falls far, far shorter than that. Our standard is relative, God's standard is absolute.

And again, let me explain this way, I mean, I've often referred to pirate righteousness as a means of explaining the differences between God's righteousness and our own. Let's say that I'm a pirate. I'm a pirate on a pirate ship and compared to my fellow pirates, I have these deep convictions about rape and murder and torture, and I just, I refuse to do that. Now I may participate with my fellow pirates when they board a ship and steal all the goods and terrorize the people that are on the ship and I won't -- I just won't go near the other stuff. Well, you know, if you

polled all the other pirates and said, "Is there any good people among you?" They would point to me. I mean, I would be the good one, but only compared to the rest of my fellow pirates. And that's the problem. You see, my goodness is relative to their badness. I mean I may look good to my fellow pirates but they're quite willing to overlook the fact that I steal, rob and terrorize the people whose ships I board. And so to my fellow pirates I'm this moral paragon, but to the passengers that I've terrorized, I'm just a pirate. See what happens is the standard shifts depending on who you look to. God's standard looks only to God and his perfection, and God's perfection is such that it doesn't allow any overlooking of any defect whatsoever when it comes to morals. So I may be quite comfortable comparing myself to my fellow fallen sinners, I may even be better than many of them. That's because my standard is relative. It's not absolute. And God's standard is absolute flawlessness. Or not. When you think about it, in his entire existence Jesus never had one fleeting thought, word or deed that was anything less than flawless. Now can you and I live up to that standard? Of course not. There's no way. So then by God's standard I don't meet that qualification, therefore I am not good by that standard, not righteous by that standard and that's exactly what God says in *Romans 3*. He says: *As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one."* And the reason why God can make such a blanket statement about our righteousness is that his standard is



one of flawless perfection. If you don't have that same flawless perfection that Jesus had, you can't make the same claim of perfection that he made when he said to the Pharisees in *John 8:46*: "*Which one of you convicts me of sin?*" Can you imagine saying that? Can you imagine sharing with somebody else, "Hey, by the way, I'm sinless. You got any sin that you can convict me of ever?" It was only the sinless son of God who could ever lay such a claim to being righteous because he was only one who lived a life that was altogether flawless. All of us are born flawed and we live flawed lives. Well, the problem is that when we live in a culture that's collapsing, it's easy to see all of its wickedness and see myself as relatively good. But again, compared to whom? I mean if it's drug addicts and sex perverts and welfare cheats and those folks in Hollywood and the porn industry, if they're the bad people, well then by definition that makes us the good people. And the devil loves that, the devil just smacks his lips at that. Because people who are convinced that they are good people become proud people and proud people become the enemies of God's kingdom. And the worse part is they don't even know it. As Jesus said, "*If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say 'we see,' your guilt remains.*" You see, in God's kingdom the humble are in, and the proud are out. And Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees in John 8 and 9 is not an isolated incident of the Pharisees against Christ. The truth is God is constantly warning

us in scripture that the religious way is a very dangerous way. And he goes out of his way to smash any thought that "good people" inherit the kingdom and that "bad people" don't. The fact is that the kingdom of God is exclusively made up of sinners saved by grace alone and as soon as you forget that, you're going to be in trouble. And again Keller points out that almost every incident in scripture that takes place between a religious person and a wicked sinner, we find it's the wicked sinner who gets it and not the -- quote -- "good person."

In John 3 and 4 we have Jesus meeting two very different people who illustrate that point. The first one is Nicodemus. Now Nicodemus is considered by everyone to be the archetypical good person, I mean he's Israel's premiere Bible teacher. We also meet somebody who's considered clearly living a wicked life and it's the Samaritan woman who meets Jesus at a well. And as we read, we find out that the good man, Nicodemus, we find him struggling mightily to understand the kingdom of God, it makes no sense to him, he can't grasp it because he still thinks the kingdom is divided between good people and bad people. Jesus tells him that it's God's Spirit alone who determines who enters the kingdom and not good deeds, and he says this in *John 3:8*. This is Jesus, he says: *"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with*

*everyone who is born of the Spirit."* Well he's telling him very basic things, that it's God who makes the decision about who becomes a believer or not and Nicodemus is completely flummoxed. He says to Jesus in *John 3:9*: "*How can these things be?*" Well now it's Jesus's turn to be amazed and not in a good way. Jesus says, you're Israel's teacher and you still don't get this?

And the very next chapter we see Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman. This is a woman with a highly checkered past. She's had all kinds of struggles in her life, she's had five husbands, she was presently living in adultery. She's the one who gets gloriously transformed. She's the one who gets it. Well, good Nicodemus is absolutely mystified. And so this wicked Samaritan woman hears the gospel from Jesus, and she goes on to lead the rest of her town to Christ. *John 4:39* said: *Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."* So once again we see demonstrated the humble are in and the proud are out. And there's a reason for that and it's really very simple. The humble have no pretense about how moral they think they are. I mean they're sinners and they know it, compared to those who are sinners and refuse to believe it. Again, Jesus made that obvious when he called Matthew to be one of his disciples. You know Matthew used to be called Levi, and he used to be a tax collector. Let me just read to you the account of Levi's

coming to become a disciple of Jesus. This is Luke 5. It says: *After this he -- that is Jesus -- went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "follow me." And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous -- and that's clearly in quotes -- "I have not come to call the -- quote -- righteous but sinners to repentance."* Well, Levi was a tax collector. These guys were considered wicked traitors, bleeding their own people in partnership with the hated enemy Rome. Levi's big advantage was that he was morally sick and he knew it. He couldn't pretend otherwise. So he's far more receptive to the truth than those who were just as morally sick but thought they were perfectly healthy, and that was the Pharisees. And once again we find the humble are in and the proud are out.

I mean we remember Zacchaeus, he's another tax collector. He hears about Jesus come to town, and he wants to see who this guy is and so he climbs up into a tree to get a better view of him. And Luke 19 says this, it says: *And when Jesus came to the place, he looked*

up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." I mean the crowd is offended. They're happy to point to Zacchaeus as a sinner as if they are not. You got to remember the standard that God is judging us by. God's standard is absolute perfection, and by that standard everyone flunks. Everyone. Romans 3:23 says: *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* You look at that, say wait a minute, is God actually saying that anything we do that falls short of his transcendently flawless glory is sinful? Well, that's exactly what God's perfection must say. You say, well, that standard is impossibly high. It's so high that only God could ever meet that. And yet God's love for us was so great that he consented to become one of us and live a perfect life in order to meet that perfect standard for us. That's why we say *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*

And what God is doing over and over again in scripture, he's trying to get this into our thick skulls, how this works. In scripture we see God trying to explain to us the level of his love through stories such as the prodigal son. And Dick Lucas, Bible commentator, pointed out the prodigal son is really a picture God,

the Father, he's pleading with the "good people" about the grace that he extends to -- quote -- "bad people" and he's trying to get them to understand. And we look at the story of the prodigal son, he's returned and the father's about to celebrate with a huge party and the older brother is furious and he refuses to go in, and we pick up the story at *Luke 15*. He says: *And he -- that's a servant -- he said to him -- that's the older brother -- and he said to him, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound." But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' And he said to him, 'Son you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'*"

The elder brother clearly deeply resents the grace shown to the younger brother. And you know why? It's because he was the good son. And because he was the good son, he thought he was entitled to grace. He says, "Look, these many years I've served you, I've never disobeyed your command. Father, you obviously don't get it.

I'm the good one, and yet here you are giving a party for the bad one." Well, see, the elder son couldn't understand that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of bad ones who have been saved by grace. He just could not understand that the humble are in and the proud are out.

Listen, again, the scripture is so filled with these, it's no problem finding them. This is *Luke 7*, this is describing yet another confrontation about this very thing that Jesus had with a Pharisee. This is *Luke 7:36*. It says: *One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who was touching him, for she is a sinner."* Well, there's something even more particularly disturbing about this story than the other ones, and it has to do with Simon. When you read the story you have to realize Simon didn't do anything. He merely thought it. This all took place inside his head. He's thinking

thoughts and Jesus begins to let him have it. In *Luke 7:44* it says: *Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman?"* Well of course Simon didn't, I mean after all she was a woman, she was a nobody, she was a sinner. I mean, good people like Simon, they have no use for people like this. These people are invisible. And Jesus continues, he says: *"I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven -- for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."* Jesus is rebuking Simon for the very thoughts that he had in his head.

Now let me just ask you, have you ever thought inside your head that you might be a little bit better than somebody else? If you've ever had those thoughts, they're the sign of a serious spiritual problem. Again we have another example. Consider the story Jesus tells of the Pharisee and the tax collector. They're both in the temple and the tax collector is in there and he's beating his breast and he's asking God to have mercy on him because he knows he's a sinner. And there on the other side is the Pharisee and he's thanking God that he is not like this scuzzy tax



collector. Again, let me read you the text. This is *Luke 18:9-14*: Jesus speaking, it says: *He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Well, you might be able to see here there's another alarming similarity between this story and the story of Simon the Pharisee, and they both have to do not with what we're doing and not with what we're saying but what we are thinking. The Pharisee never said a word to the tax collector. This conversation that we're reading about was never spoken aloud. It took place entirely inside the Pharisee's head. It says: *"The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus."* Now again, I have to ask have you ever entertained any thoughts about how bad people are, and have you ever thought deep down inside that you were just a little bit

better than those folks? And if you answered no, you better be prepared to add lying to the list of sins that you have to deal with. I mean this is how it happens, you see, when people move in our minds from being lost to being bad, we begin to suddenly move from knowing that we are bad also to thinking that we're actually the good people and they're the bad people. And God insists there is none good, no, not one. And that the difference between being wicked and being lost is one word, and that word is grace. You see, all of us at some point were wicked and lost and some of us are just still lost. Jesus Christ came to save that which was lost, and that's just what he expects of us as well, no matter how lost the culture is. You know, it reflects on us personally and it reflects on how we see the way that we interact with this culture. I try at any one time to have at least a half-dozen non-believers that I'm actively praying for and trying to interact with. Those folks are constant reminders to me of where I once was spiritually and how by God's grace alone saved me. And if I didn't see these folks as lost and desperately needy, I would effortlessly move from their "badness" to my "goodness," and in the process I would wind up blinding myself. See, the gospel is simply a matter of one beggar telling another beggar where he's found the bread of life. And when that happens, sanctification begins and sanctification is what happened the moment we become one of Christ's. It's that moment we by faith accept Christ's offer of salvation, God's Holy

Spirit begins this life long process where God starts shaping and molding us into the very image of his Son, and it's absolutely unique in that every one of us has this unique ability to bear the image of Christ within us that nobody else has like you. It's as unique as your DNA. So God is determined to work that process throughout the rest of our lives, as he said in *Philippians 1:6*: *He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

And I've described sanctification many, many times this way, I said, it really boils down to God telling us two crucial facts. Fact number one, God tells you I love you, and fact number two is you are full of it. If you forget the first part of the formula, the first part that says God loves me, well, you're going to think that you're just a worm and you're going to be filled with despair. But if you forget the second part, the part that you and I are full of it, I'm going to wind up thinking of myself as altogether and lovely and worthy of this grace and I'm going to become proud. It's critically important that we hold both truths together equally, God does love us, and we are full of it. They both work together. And the reason why it's incredibly important to remember that, because in the kingdom of God the humble are in and the proud are out.

Well, we've seen what godliness is not. It's not all about being good enough for God. Next we want to look at what godliness is. Again, remember the definition of godliness, it's a God-ward attitude that does what is well pleasing to him. It's having a heart and a hunger for God, but it starts with an honest assessment of my own heart and we get that again from scripture. I want to look at some biblical examples. I want to look at four of the most godly men who ever lived. I want to look at Moses and David and Peter and Paul. Well, all of them were deeply flawed. I mean Moses and David were murderers, David was an adulterer, Peter was a blow hard and a coward, Paul was a zealot and a murderer. Well what made them so godly? Well, one word and I think that word is humility. They saw themselves accurately and honestly before God. They knew they were full of it. I mean Moses in *Psalm 90* says: *You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.* David said this in *Psalm 51*: *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.* Is it was Peter who said to Christ in *Luke 5*: *"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."* And it was Paul who said in *1 Timothy*: *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.*

Well, these are some of the most godly men in all of scripture. I mean did they all share some kind of morbid desire to put themselves down or did they understand something about themselves that we so easily forget, something that is true for every child of God and that is we are all sinners saved by grace alone. And so a godly man or woman is simply a person who truly sees himself or herself as an undeserving recipient of God's grace and mercy. He truly understands the nature of the gift he's received, if not the scope, thus he can't help but be drawn from the gift to the giver of the gift. The difference between a religious person and a godly person is that a religious person truly believes that they give God a gift of their life lived as well as it can be lived and therefore he owes them a decent life in return. A godly person knows that Jesus Christ has already lived the perfect life for him, and he receives that life as a gift and then flows that life back to Christ.

Okay. So how do I know if you're one or the other? Well, here's one way to tell. How do you respond when God doesn't give you what you thought he was going to give you? Are you mystified? Are you confused? Are you maybe even discouraged? Well so was Moses, so was David, so was Peter, so was Paul at different points in their lives, but they still trusted. Are you angry, are you bitter, are you resentful? That's how religious people respond. It's the

elder son syndrome. It's God, I give you a thoroughly decent life and you give me nothing, not even a goat.

So how do you move from being a religious person to being a godly person? I mean after all, Peter is telling us to make every effort to add to our faith godliness, so that has to bring us to, oh, okay, how do I do that? Well, first let me just say this to the moms and the dads here, those who are still raising their families. I just want to tell you the most important quality you can ever give to your children is a heart and a hunger for God. I mean that can never be taught. It can only be caught. In fact all of the teaching and doctrine and Bible lessons that you come up with will absolutely backfire unless they are accompanied by an integrity of living that communicates that nothing is more important to you than God and his kingdom. And the extent to which you're willing to compromise that integrity will be the extent to which your children see that God and his kingdom are either real and to be cherished or just another part of our evangelical culture that they'll feel free to reject. It doesn't matter if you home school or public school or Christian school or no school. Folks, if it ain't real to you, it's not going to be real to them. It's all a matter of integrity and integrity is not the same as perfection. See, perfection is what good people strive for. It's what the Pharisees demanded. Grace and mercy is what believers strive for to both give and

receive.

Peter tells us to add godliness to our faith. Okay. What about those of us who are just discovering this or just finally realizing we have a need for godliness, how do we appropriate this? Well, how did Moses, David, Peter and Paul do it? How did they receive godliness? The answer is actually a little too simple. They just asked for it. I mean when you stop and think about it, asking God for the gift of godliness should be a no-brainer because it's exactly what God wants for his children. I mean Moses in *Psalm 90* asks God to *"Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."*

So the question for us this morning is what satisfies you? I mean do you think godly people are just kind of born that way? I don't think so. You see, godliness is a gift. It's a gift to be sought after and asked for. God says: *"Draw near to me and I will draw near to you."* And I think one of our biggest problems is that most of us don't really want to do that. We would much prefer to draw near any type of substitute. An evangelical culture is a perfect substitute. It is incredibly easy to have a form of godliness and deny the power thereof. I mean, it's so easy to do the church thing and thus kind of manage godliness like we manage everything else, and we're fooling no one except ourselves. I mean it is God

who said in *Matthew 15*: *"These people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me."*

Godliness is going after our hearts. It's wanting to have inside us that heart that longs and hungers for God.

Let me give you a practical example in my life just when I've seen examples of what I think godliness actually looks like. And I want to use for that example Rosie Zaorski. How many of you remember Rosie? She died what, maybe eight, ten years ago? She was just a very humble woman, she worked in a factory. She was, you know, she didn't have a great education, but she was so full of joy. You know, you say, "How are you doing, Rosie?" She said, "If I was doing any better there would be two of me." She used to say that all the time. She used to tell Steve not to take any wooden nickels. I still don't know what that means. But she was just a wonderful person, died from a terrible disease Huntington's chorea, but she demonstrated to me one time exactly what godliness looks like. It was a terrible winter morning, there was snow and ice, all of the rest and all of the churches in the area had closed down including all of the businesses. For some reason Rosie never got the message. And so she showed up in church and found the building closed and nobody there and a couple days later I saw her and she was explaining this to me and she's giving me a hard time for closing the church, good naturally, and so I asked her, "What did



you do when you found out there was nobody there?" She said, "I just went out looking for another church that was open." I looked at her odd. She said, "I had to find another place to worship." I just thought how many of us would seek out another place to worship because they're hungry for God? See to me that's what real godliness looks like, and until we see it and want it and ask for it, godliness will always be for somebody else. David asked God in *Psalm 51: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.* And Paul asked God in *Ephesians 3: To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.* I mean he knew the one principle that enabled him to seek true godliness and it was Peter who stated it. He said: *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* And once again we see the humble are in and the proud are out.

So let me conclude this morning with a number of questions about godliness, about having a heart and a hunger for God. The first question is: Do you have godliness? Well, the first question to ask yourself is, okay, how do I relate to those who are outside the kingdom? There are three different responses that you can have. You can have indifference, you can have cynicism, or you can have sorrow and concern, and only one of those responses is godly and I think you know which one it is. And the second question is, okay, how do I relate to God's will for my life when it doesn't go the

way I thought it was going to go? Am I bitter, am I angry, am I resentful or am I trusting God even in difficult times? And again, only one of those responses is godly. And the third question is: How do I gain this godliness? How do I become a person with a heart and a hunger for God? Well again, we realize what godliness is not and so we confess to God our pride which is really what keeps us from it, even if it involves only thinking in our heads that maybe we're better than an unbelieving world that surrounds us. So we recognize that we've sinned, and so we confess it and forsake it and we ask God to forgive us. And if the plight of those caught up in the devil's snare leaves us cynical and irritated, we need to confess that as well because if we don't we recognize it's going to render us deaf and blind to the Holy Spirit. And if we're bitter that God hasn't kept up his part of the bargain, if my righteous living hasn't produced physical blessings from him, then we need to admit that and confess that. And secondly, we need to understand what godliness is. It's just a heart and a hunger for God. And thirdly, perhaps the easiest of all is just ask. Simply ask God for the gift of godliness. Ask God for what David asked, ask him to create in you a clean heart instead of a prideful bitter heart because *God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble* and in his kingdom I think you know by now, the humble are in, the proud are out. Let's pray.

*Father, I just want to collectively for all of us here ask for the gift of godliness. I pray that you would give to each and every one of us here a hunger for you, a desire to see you high and lifted up, a desire to see your kingdom advanced. And Lord, we know that the greatest impediment to that is us, it's our pride, especially, Lord, when we're in a culture that's collapsing all around us, it's so easy to see them as the bad people and us as the good people when, Lord, the entire kingdom is made up of sinners saved by grace alone. Lord, give us the sure set certain knowledge of who we are, and give us the gift of godliness, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*