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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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And Glory Has Come to Me Through Them

John 17:10

Prayer: *Father God, we just again thank you and praise you for who you are and we thank you for the gift of your Son. And Father, today is a special day, it's the day that we remember your Son and remember what he's done for us on the cross. And so Father, I pray this morning you would give us the further gift of your Holy Spirit, that you would enable us by the power of your Spirit to open up your book and to learn at a deeper level what it is your Son gave us when he gave himself on the cross. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as I just mentioned it's once again the first Sunday of the month and this is the Sunday that we remember Christ and his cross. Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and there he celebrated for the last time a Passover supper. Matthew 26 describes it. It says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it,*

all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and his blood and then he asked them to remember this sacrifice on a regular basis and this is what we call the Lord's table. And we celebrate it once a month and this is the way we do it, we meditate on what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross, we examine ourselves, we allow God's Holy Spirit to work within us to point out areas in our lives where he's convicting us of sin, we confess that sin and then we participate in the elements. *John 6:53* says: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Terrell Owens was a great football player. He had an abundance of talent. As a receiver he could outrun, he could out-jump, he could out-catch just about anybody who tried to defend him. He was one of the most naturally talented players to ever play the game, and yet his career was marked by nothing but turmoil. I mean he played for the 49ers, he played for the Cowboys, he played for the Eagles

and finally for the Bengals, and in each place, he very quickly wore out his welcome. Eventually no team in the entire NFL would take him in spite of his overwhelming talent. His career ended on this sad note: "Terrell Owens' football career ended Tuesday when the Allen Wranglers of the Indoor Football League came to the same conclusion each of the 32 teams in the National Football League realized after the 2010 NFL season -- Terrell Owens was no longer worth the bother he once was. The Wranglers cut Owens." What destroyed Terrell Owens was his ego. He was what people call a glory hound. When he played, in the locker room, in his off time, Terrell Owens was primarily concerned with Terrell Owens. His desire to put himself first at the expense of everyone else around him is what proved to be his undoing. God says this in *Philippians 2*. He says: *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Now instead of a football game or a football player, let's look at something far more serious. The nation of Israel has just left Egypt and they've been enslaved there for hundreds of years. God has raised up Moses as their champion who's going to lead them out of Egypt to the promised land. Now if you're familiar with the story at all, you realize that Pharaoh in Egypt really had no

intention of letting the Jews go. They were his major labor force and he had no intention of seeing that resource disappear just because they wanted to go worship their God. Moses insisted that Pharaoh let his people go and Pharaoh's refusal resulted in the ten plagues that beset Egypt. And after those ten plagues, Pharaoh sends the Jews away and then he has second thoughts and he tries desperately to get them back. And we learn from scripture that Pharaoh's panic was at the hand of God and it was all designed for one thing. This is *Exodus 14*. It says: *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon. Pharaoh will think, 'The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.' And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his Army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD."* So the Israelites did this. God tells Moses he's going to manipulate Pharaoh into destroying the last remnants of his Army and in the process of pursuing the Jews, God was going to "gain glory for myself." *Exodus 14:5*: *When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them, and said, "What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!"* So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. He took six hundred of the

best chariots of Egypt, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly. So you get the picture, the Israelites see the Egyptians marching out towards them and they cry out to God but now they're crying out that God has brought them only out in the desert to kill them. Verse 15, it says: Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his Army, through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen." Well, we all know what happened, I mean, the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground and they're pursued by the Egyptians and their charioteers and they're lured into the sea pursuing the Jews on this same dry ground until: Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen -- the entire Army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground,

with a wall of water on their right and on their left. That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

Now if someone was to ask you why is it -- why did God part the Red Sea? Well, you could answer in order to provide an escape for the Israelites. You could also say he also wanted to rescue the Israelites and destroy the threat the Egyptian Army might still pose to them in the future. Both of those answers would be true but they would be somewhat incomplete. The real answer to the question why did God part the Red Sea is provided by God himself when he says in verse 17: *"I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his Army, through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen."*

The question that I really want to address this morning is one that I believe lurks in the backs of the minds of anyone who has seriously studied the old testament and God's ways. I mean, let me just bluntly put the question this way: Terrell Owens is a

microscopic version of what happens when everything stems from your own ego. Why isn't God just a macroscopic version of the very same thing? I mean why is Terrell Owens' ego something that is destructive and sinful and yet God's apparent ego seems to be something we need to reward. And I don't think this is an idle question. You know, it's been a few months since we actually looked at the scriptures that we've been working our way through in communion. We were looking at the 17th chapter of the gospel of John and we last looked at that passageway back in August and there we found Jesus praying his high priestly prayer. This is what he said. He said: *"And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believe that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them."* There it is again, *"And glory has come to me through them."* I mean here we see the Father and the Son are clearly and absolutely committed to glory coming to them through us.

This morning I want to look at why pursuing glory in God is in itself glorious while pursuing it in human beings is not. And the first reason why God demands glory from us and pursues it is because glory is right and proper for him. In a word, it is absolutely appropriate. Again, let me use an example. I've used this before. This is an example of an elementary school teacher to illustrate the idea that pursuing the glory of God is simply the right thing to do. Let's say you're a teacher, and let's say that you teach second graders and you decided that you're going to take them on a day trip to a museum. You don't have to but you're just doing this out of the goodness of your heart and you think that it's a good thing to do and you realize you're going to have to do some work in order to accomplish this. You're going to have to put on a fundraiser so you can raise the necessary funds to charter a bus to get the whole thing lined up and you do the whole thing and you spent the day and get some chaperons in and you spend the day overseeing the kids' trip to a museum. And the day's a great success, everybody enjoys themselves, the kids seem to have a wonderful time. They come back. And after a week or so you decide as their teacher, as somebody who really cares about these kids, that something is just not quite right because not a single child or parent said thanks. Now the teacher can either just kind of chalk it up to thoughtlessness and let it go or she could try another approach. And what matters for our discussion here really

is the teacher's motive. I mean, if the teacher's motive is she really needs to have somebody say wonderful things to her about what a lovely teacher she is and how much effort she put into it, well then she's trying really to use the students to kind of stroke her own ego and that's wrong. If, however, she genuinely believes that it is right and proper for young people to learn to appreciate something that they've been given and to say "thank you" for it, well then her motive is simply to get her students to recognize what is right and proper, what is appropriate. She sends a letter to the parents. And in the letter she simply states the facts that nobody said "thank you." And she suggests that it might be a good idea for parents to encourage their kids to write thank you notes. Well, the parents, particularly if this is a 21st century North American school, they're outraged. How dare you demand praise and thankfulness from my little Johnny? Who do you think you are? We pay taxes. We expect this. Now if the teacher's motive is to rightfully get her students lined up with doing the right thing, she in all likelihood will say to herself or maybe even out loud, do you really think I need praise and thanksgiving from seven-year-olds? I mean, do you really think I'm that desperate? Do you think I would seek out second graders for that task if I really needed that kind of affirmation? Or do you think maybe, just maybe saying "thank you" is a skill your children should master? Well, that's not very far from what God is expressing here in *Psalm 50*.

Listen to what he says. He says: *"Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."* You see, God is saying he's not demanding glory from us because of any need on his part but because giving him glory is absolutely appropriate for us. In Job 41 he says: *Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.* What God is saying is that calls in scripture to glorify God never, never stem from neediness on his part.

So the next logical question is, okay, then what does God's call for glory stem from? Well, I can tell you it comes from our need to give glory and not God's need to get glory. You see, glory is what we were designed for. What if God knew what was the absolute best for human beings, I mean, what if he knew exactly what he

needed to point to for us to live the most fulfilled and most happy lives? What if the creator of human beings, as the creator of human beings he knew exactly what fulfilled the deepest longing of his creatures? And what if he alone knew that the answers to all of those questions was himself? I mean would he then be wrong in pointing all things toward himself? I mean, wouldn't he be guilty of some kind of gross idolatry if he pointed at something other than himself? And wouldn't we be guilty if we pointed at anything other than him as the source of all good things? God says this in *James 1*. He says: *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.* You know, we say "thank you," we often do, and we often say "thank you" more often than not that every good and perfect gift comes not necessarily from God, but more often than not from mother nature or our own efforts or just plain good luck. And God says in *Romans 1*: *For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.* What God is saying is that the most appropriate response to living a life that we live is to honor God as God and give thanks to him and to refuse to do that is arguably the most inappropriate response you could ever make. I

mean for God to agree with that response by refusing to acknowledge himself as the source of all glory would be for him to participate fully in our folly. I mean God insists that we give him glory because giving him glory is completely and absolutely appropriate. He insists that we see him as the ultimate because a God of truth has got to embrace truth in every shape, matter and form and the truth is God alone is the only one worthy of glory. Glory to God is not only appropriate, it is also the most accurate understanding of who God is.

To go back to this analogy of an athlete, take the case of an athlete. Let's talk about Terrell Owens. And let's say Terrell Owens' skill level wasn't just hundreds of times better than the average person but tens of thousands of times better than anybody who had ever played the game. Let's just say he was a freak of nature who played this sport as a man among boys and he shattered every single record that could ever be and that ever existed in his sport. Now wouldn't he be guilty of some kind of false modesty if he pointed to somebody else as an example of how you're supposed to play the position? I mean, wouldn't accuracy demand that he regard himself as the very best at that place, at that position? But don't just limit this to athletics. I mean, we're talking about why simple accuracy demands that God place himself as the source point of all glory. Let's say we're going to talk about

intellectual glory. You know, maybe we'll be speaking about men like Einstein and maybe Stephen Hawking, somebody like that, what if there was a man whose intellectual capacity made Einstein and Hawking look like schoolyard dunces? What if his intellect was not just superior but it encompassed all of the intellects of every human who had ever lived? Let's just say his understanding was not just of some but of all knowledge that ever existed, of all knowledge that ever existed from the dawn of time to the very end of the future. And what if that individual not only knew everything there was to know about everything that ever existed but he also knew everything that could ever be discovered about anything in the future. You know, nobody knew a single thing about quantum physics in the 18th century but Jesus knew. And he knew that back in the first century because he is the author of quantum physics. And similarly, technology and understandings that will not yet be discovered for a thousand years are things that Jesus already knows because they, too, flow from who he is and what he has created. Listen to what he says in *Isaiah 46*. He says:

"Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'"

Now is God pointing to himself? Well absolutely. Is there anyone else that God could possibly point to that would in any way

resemble the one that he is describing? And again the answer is absolutely not. And if there was such a person, he would be God. And whoever was pointing him out would not be God. I mean do you see how there can only be one such ultimate God that by his very nature he has no choice but to point to himself as the source of all glory? Wouldn't that person be exhibiting a grotesque form of false modesty if he pointed to somebody other than himself as the source of all intellectual glory?

What about creativity? What if there was an individual who had the creative artistry of ten thousand Picassos, Rembrandts and Michelangelos and what if he exercised that creativity not by creating statues of David like Michelangelo did but by creating the actual David that he knit together in his mother's womb down to the very nerves, sinews and muscles that made up his body. I mean, would he not be guilty of false modesty if he pointed humanity to other artists instead of himself? And what if his creative canvas was not just a medium of paint or clay or marble but instead was creatures and stars and planets and galaxies? I mean, what if instead of paint and canvas he used stars, galaxies and the universe as his canvas and he made drawings out of stars? I mean *Job 9* says: *Who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars; who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea; who made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the*

chambers of the south; who does great things beyond searching out, and marvelous things beyond number. Wouldn't one be guilty of an incredible false modesty by pointing to anyone other than himself as the source of all glory? I mean is it boasting to insist that you are who you are? I mean I remember one of the most famous boasters of all time was the boxer Muhammad Ali. He used to say, "I am the greatest." And you know what? When it came to boxing he unquestionably was. Now should he have pointed to a lesser boxer in order to show some form of false humility? You know when it comes to boxing, there was another quote that he made that rings true. He said, "It ain't bragging if you can do it." And that's true, you know. I mean there's no doubt in terms of raw personal power, Muhammad Ali could stop the average man in his tracks. So when it came to boxing Ali could do it. He simply stated the obvious.

But what about another man's power? This individual I'm speaking of was truly the greatest and his sheer raw personal power was able to instantly stop not just a single man but hundreds of them at once. It happened when a mob came to arrest Jesus. And we'll look at that next, but first let me just sum up where we are so far. When it comes to giving God glory, we can sense its appropriateness. It's just the right thing to do. We can demand for accuracy's sake that we acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ for

who he truly was, the greatest person who's ever walked this planet. The third reason why we give all glory to God has nothing to do with appropriateness or accuracy and everything to do with our astonishment at the love of God in Christ, and that of necessity is going to take us to the cross.

As the elders begin distributing the bread, just take a moment to consider the God that we are worshiping. It is appropriate to worship this God. It is an accurate assessment of who our God is and it is astonishing to consider this God. As the elements are being distributed, consider also this warning that God gives about communion itself. This is what God 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 repeat this warning every time we do this because I want you to understand that communion is extremely serious business and to enter into it in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster. As I say, if you're not absolutely confident that you are a child of the King, if you are not certain that you have by faith trusted in him as

your Savior, if you first need to be reconciled to your brother before you bring your sacrifice to the altar, then don't participate. Just pass the elements on. Now on the other hand you can make the mistake of thinking that unless you're spotlessly perfect you are somehow or other unworthy to receive communion. Well, the enemy loves that mistake just as well. And we point it out over and over again, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin, it doesn't mean that you never fail. It means that you recognize that the salvation you've been given is a gift. It's a gift that no one is capable of earning. And I'm going to repeat Dane Ortlund's quote till every one of us has it memorized. He says: "In the kingdom of God the one thing that qualifies you is knowing --" what? "-- that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." He goes on to say that what it means is when you do fail, you are aware that you sin and the reason why you're aware that you sinned is because you have the Spirit of God within you convicting you. And so you grieve as someone who knows that you have a Father in heaven who longs to forgive and cleanse you. And God says in *1 John 1:9*: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So just to make sure, being a child of the King does not mean that you're spotless, it doesn't mean that you have no sins. It means that when you do sin, you understand that there is somebody up in heaven right now

speaking on your behalf. 1 John 2:1 says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* You see, we are able to do this because we have his alien righteousness and not our own. His righteousness belongs to us and because of that, we are free to eat from his table. And so if you love the Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that he purchased for you. You know, 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 be made worthy of heaven. So as the elements are going out, I want us to just realize that we are able to participate in them because of him. And just take a moment to ask yourself this morning: Do I give God the glory he is due? Just take a moment to ask yourself that question.

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

As the elders begin distributing the cup, I want to take some time to look at the astonishment of the cross and I want to focus in on just one minor incident that took place during the cross. There's

a simple statement that was made in John's gospel about the crowd that came to arrest Jesus the night before he died. The quote is this, it says: *So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers.* Well the Greek in that text indicates that Judas brought with him that night what he calls a cohort of Roman soldiers. Now a cohort consists of six hundred men. Nobody gives an exact number but we know probably wasn't six hundred but there was a lot more than a few. Probably hundreds. We know that there was a very large group of soldiers that came. This is *John 18:3* describing it, it says: *So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.* You have to understand the translation that we're reading from here. It doesn't do justice at all to what it is that Jesus said. You see, Jesus did not just say, "I am he" as if he's identifying himself. What he said in Greek was the phrase "ego eime". That's critical to understand because what he said in Greek was literally the phrase "I am," which is literally claiming that he is God himself. It's the same term that the God the Father used in Genesis. And the crowd knew exactly what he was saying. Jesus had only used this term three other times in John's gospel and each time he said

it was to say literally, "I am God." This is in *John 8:24*, Jesus said: *"I told you, you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am -- then parenthetically "he," 'cause that's not in the actual language -- "for unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins."* In *John 8:28* it says: *So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am" -- ego eime -- "and that I do nothing of my own authority but speak just as the Father taught me."* Then *John 8:57*: *So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." Ego eime. So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.*

Why do you think they picked up stones? They picked up stones because they knew he was claiming to be God. Well, what happens next at Jesus's arrest is yet another window into why it is appropriate and accurate to glorify this man. *John 18:6* says: *When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.* I want you to picture this for a second. There's a huge crowd of armed soldiers. They've been assembled to arrest Jesus. They have no idea that this is the individual whose intellect encompasses all knowledge ever assembled in history past, present and future, that every Google search, that every Ph.D., astrophysicist in every think tank in every university cannot touch the vastness of the glory of this man's intellect. Soldiers also

have no idea that his creative power far surpasses any of the glories of Rome and it extends to the vastness of galaxies that number in the trillions. They don't know that he created by the power of his word every single thing their senses can take in from sunsets to mountaintops to the very ground that they're standing on. I mean, they may have heard rumors about his personal power that he could stop a ferocious storm simply by commanding it to cease and desist or how he could feed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, how he even had the power to raise dead people from the dead. Now they were coming to arrest him. And how that happened only highlights how astonishing Jesus' love for us is. It illustrates how perfectly appropriate it is for us as creatures to give glory where glory is due and it demonstrates simple -- how simple accuracy demands that we acknowledge that God is infinitely superior in all areas of knowledge, creativity and power and hence we owe God that glory.

And finally it proclaims why God is worthy of all glory and that his glory is not only appropriate and accurate, it is beyond all other things astonishing. You see, this very same individual, the Lord Jesus Christ, is about to undergo the most astounding humiliation the universe has ever witnessed. The king, the creator of the universe, the one who holds and sustains the universe second by second by the power of his being, the one who supplied the very

breath to the lungs of the soldiers who are there confronting him is about to be arrested and beaten and mocked and spit upon, stripped naked and executed all by the people he had created. Now he had already told Peter in the garden of Gethsemane that should he speak one word that his Father would send 9600 angels to protect him. And we know from scripture, we know in the book of Isaiah it describes one angel attacking Sennacherib's Army of 185,000, in one night he destroyed them all, one angel. God says I have 9600 angels just waiting. That Jesus refused is astonishing. *Matthew 26* says: *Then Jesus said to him, that's Peter, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions" -- a legion is 800 -- "of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"* You see, all of heaven was on its tiptoes just waiting for a nod from Jesus to unleash its collective fury on the entire world for daring to touch God's anointed. But Jesus wouldn't have it. But before he allows them to arrest him, he gives forth one last hint of his power by simply stating his name, *Ego eime*. At those mere words hundreds of soldiers fall backwards and land flat on the ground. This was Jesus letting us know that it was he who was in ultimate charge of his own execution. They arrested him only by his permission. What is astonishing here is the love of Christ is what gave that permission. I mean, you can

look at his omniscience, you can look at his omnipotence, look at his creative ability to shape and mold the universe and it would all go to glorifying a God of infinite power, wisdom and might, but nothing can prepare us for a God whose ultimate glory lies in the ability to love those who in no way could ever, ever merit that love. *Romans 5* says: *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.* Jesus' defiant statement *Ego eime* demanded that his execution proceed. Yet his statement was his ultimate claim to glory. I mean Jesus was claiming to be God in the flesh. Because only he knew that it was not appropriate and it was not accurate to point to anyone and anything but himself.

Here's the astonishing part. If you had all the intellectual acumen there ever was, if you had all the creative ability there ever was and all of the personal power there ever was, you could certainly command the respect and the fear of every other human being, but that's all you could ever require, all you could ever demand. But Jesus went way beyond supernatural intellect, creativity and power. He demonstrated astonishing love. See, he poured out his love and by that love made us vessels that would reflect not our love but his. This is what Jesus said in his high priestly prayer. He's speaking to his Father. He says, *"The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become*

perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you have you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world." You see, we see that glory and we reflect that glory and God gains that glory when we love others as he loved us.

Terrell Owens' great failure was in thinking too highly of himself. Think about this for a second. For the Lord Jesus, that's impossible. Can't do it. There's no height that he does not exceed including infinity, to infinity and beyond. And yet Philippians tells us: *Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* Folks, that's love that's astonishing. Jesus' prayer at the end of his ministry was this: *"O Righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."* Here's the privilege part for us, you see, you and I represent the ongoing success of that prayer. The ultimate glory

that God is entitled to is the love with which we have been loved reflected back to the world. *"That the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."* If that doesn't astonish you, nothing will. I want us to ask ourselves the big question this morning, the big question this morning is: Does that love come from you? Does it describe the love that Christ is growing in you? Take a moment to ask yourself that very question.

1 Corinthians the 11 chapter says: In the same manner, he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." So take, and drink.

This is the part that we call heads, heart and feet. It's where we try to understand some practical way to remember Christ and his cross. And I've mentioned this once before, a while back I was interviewed by another pastor and he said, "What do you see your primary job as?" And you can -- there's a hundred different descriptions people can give as to what a pastor is supposed to do. I said, this is the way I see my job primarily. It's my job to help you fall deeper and deeper in love with Christ. That's my job. That's what I'm supposed to do, as I see it at least. And I want to explain to you why that is so incredibly important and I want to relate that back to when I first fell in love with Janice,

with my wife. When I fell in love with Janice, there was nothing on earth that I wanted to do but be with her. You know, if she said, "Oh, let's go dig a ditch," that would have been the greatest thing in the world. Oh, let's go dig a ditch with her. She did want me to go to fabric stores and that was kind of pushing it, so but everybody has limits, you know. But the point that I'm trying to make is that my love for her made what I wanted to do or what she wanted to do the most important thing. And when we look at what motivates people in the church, you know, sometimes it's legalism, sometimes it's guilt, sometimes it's obligation, it's a sense of tradition, what you have to do. The motivator that we need to have that really cuts across everything is falling in love with Christ, being astonished at what he's done. When you really reach that stage where you're just overwhelmingly in love with Christ, what are you going to object to when he asks you to do it? You want to dig a ditch? Sure, I'll dig a ditch. I'm in love with him. And here's my point. We can either project legalism or guilt or tradition or what you have to do when we share the gospel or we can project the fact that we're in love with Christ because he's so astonishing. And let me tell you, if you're sharing the love of Christ because it's real and it's genuine and you are astonished still that he would love someone like you, you got a pathway for that message that you would never have any other way. People want to hear about a God whose love is that astonishing. And so once

again I just want to at the end of this service just pray for each of us that we would be astonished by the love of Christ, that we would carry that astonishment so that we can't stay silent. We're talking to somebody, say this is the most incredible thing there is in all of the universe. How could I possibly not share it? I want us to be able to not keep silent because we're so astonished at the love of Christ. Let's pray.

Father, we praise you and we thank you for the gift of your Son. I just cannot imagine what it was like for the Father to watch his Son being beaten and mocked and spit upon and stripped and hung. And yet for our sakes, Lord, you held back your hand of judgment. I thank you for Father, Son and Holy Spirit loving us in ways that make no sense at all to me, in ways that just make me marvel that he would. Lord, we are astonished at your love. I pray that you would give us each the ability not just to feel that astonishment but to share it. And I pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.