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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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"My Witness is True"

John 8:14

Prayer: *Father God, we do thank you and we praise you for the incredible gift that we have, the gift that we have received which is the gift of your Son. We are just so incredibly grateful that you gave us Jesus. Father, this is the day that we set aside to focus on you, on your cross, on what you have done for us at the cross, and so we pray in a special way that you would give us the power of your Holy Spirit to open up your book, to look anew at those words and to see deeper and broader and greater stretches of what it is you've done when you gave us that gift. Give us the ability to grow in our love and our adoration of your Son, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, I just said this is the first day of the month, first Sunday of the month, and this is the day that we remember Jesus and his cross. And we start that out by remembering Jesus on the night that he died, he met with his disciples and there for the last time he celebrated a Passover supper with them which is recorded in *Matthew 26:26-29*. It says this: *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 wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and of his blood, and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to repeat this remembrance of his sacrifice on a regular basis, and this is what we call the Lord's table. And we celebrate it once a month, and we do that by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on his cross, by asking God's Holy Spirit to point out areas in our lives where we are sinning, asking him to point that out to us so that we might be convicted of sin, by confessing our sins and then by participating in the elements. *John 6:53* says this: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Now we've been following the life of Jesus, and so far we've worked our way up to the eighth chapter of the gospel of John. If you

remember where we were the last time, Jesus has just confronted the Pharisees about their own sin after they've presented him with the woman who had been taken in adultery. And so we see Jesus exposes their sin, he dismisses their case, and he rescues the woman and then after turning to the crowd, he says, "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*" You see, the light that had gloried with the Father before time had begun had come into the darkness and he had come into the darkness with a very specific task at hand. Jesus came to glorify his Father by bearing that light. He came to call, he came to ransom, he came to rescue his sheep by paying the price of their sin on the cross. But he came into a world whose first love was the darkness; a world that viewed the light that he was not as a gift but as a threat. So they were not about to accept Jesus' testimony. *John 8:13-18* describes what takes place next, it says this: *The Pharisees therefore said to him, "You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true." Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent*

me bears witness about me."

You see, going back to the book of Deuteronomy, it had been established that it required the testimony of two witnesses, particularly in a capital case. *Deuteronomy 17:6* says: *On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.* So simply put, a person could not witness by himself. In verse 14: *Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going."*

I want you to imagine just for a second, just imagine where Jesus is coming from. Just imagine, imagine knowing precisely where Jesus came from, where he was headed to and knowing what Jesus knew. Jesus came from heaven itself where with the Father and with the Spirit for all time he was the ruler of the universe. He came from creating everything that had being, from the Milky Way galaxy to the planet they were standing on was part of, to the very sun that lit up the day that they were under, to the very vocal cords the Pharisees were using to attack him verbally. And he knew precisely where he was going even if none of those around them had any idea at all. He had come to ransom and rescue his lost sheep.

It was going to cost him his very life as well as every shred of dignity that he had, not just as the king of the universe but as a human being as well. And part of the immense burden that he bore was knowing precisely who he was, where he was headed and what awaited him there. But another part of the burden was the immense patience it required for him to tolerate not just the ignorance but the profoundly proud ignorance of his detractors.

"I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going." Now Jesus was saying, I know what I know, and I know it perfectly. You, on the other hand, don't know what you don't know. One of the great limitations of any earthly knowledge is that you really don't know what you don't know. You know, I could think I was an absolutely brilliant mathematician if I had a thorough grasp of addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication, I could walk around thinking I really know math until somebody approaches me and says what do you know about differential equations? I don't know a thing about differential equations. But if I was a mathematician, I would say, gee, not only do I not know what this stuff is I now know that I didn't know what I didn't know. That makes me a flawed and failed mathematician. And that's how it is with any knowledge that we finite human beings acquire. We can never know what it is we don't know. Jesus never had that limitation. He knew all things. He

knew -- quote -- *"where he came from and where he was going,"* and that included knowing everything we needed to know to live life to the full, and that's part of the reason that he was here living among us. You see, it was his -- his Father's determination that his glory would be known for our sakes. And you know, we terribly misunderstand what that means. Now, I could see where a non-believer looking at scripture could come upon some verses and think that God is a flawed, kind of a sinful glory hound because there's scripture that seem to indicate that that's all that God is interested in. For instance, after the Jews flee Egypt, they're headed toward the Red Sea and God makes this statement in *Exodus 14:17-18*, he says this: *"And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."*

God clearly desires glory, but it's not remotely the same kind of glory that we crave. You see, God is not saying I'm going to do a gigantic magic trick and everybody is going to applaud me. That's kind of what people would think when they first look at this. And what he's acknowledging is a far -- is far more basic than a search for our applause. You see, God is using Pharaoh to demonstrate that the universe is out of kilter when it thinks that a created

being can shake his fist at God and his people and think that they can somehow get away with it. God is simply demonstrating who is who in this conflict. He's the sovereign over all creation including the Pharaoh in Egypt. You see, God has his plans for Israel and Pharaoh has his plans for Israel as well. But Pharaoh terribly misjudges God's attributes and his character by attempting to defy those plans. And God's glory is nothing more than him making his character and his attributes known. And this is what God does not for his sake, but for our sake. Now, one of God's attributes is a term known as aseity. God has the attribute of aseity. That's a fifty cent word that means that God needs nothing. God can be described as -- quote -- "of himself."

C. Michael Patton defines it this way, he says: God was not in heaven twiddling his thumbs before creation and therefore decided to create us to avoid eternal boredom. It was not that God was lonely and needed companionship. Neither was God in need of someone to respond to him by giving him glory.

Psalms 50:7-12 says this: "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."

Patton goes on to say: God does not need people's sacrifices. God does not need people's prayers. God does not need people's love. God owns everything. He is fully self-satisfied. And God did not and does not need us to glorify Him. It was C.S. Lewis who spoke about God's aseity when he said of himself, you know, "I hardly need my dog's approval of my latest manuscript." What he was saying is that God's aseity is such that he hardly needs the stamp of approval of us humans on what he does for anything. He was here to bless us by revealing to us who he is.

And so Jesus in this dialogue with the Pharisees from our text this morning, what he's really doing is he's making his character and his attributes known. He says: *"I know where I came from, and where I'm going; but you do not know where I come from and where I'm going."* You see, Jesus completed the Father and the Father's desire for glory was because that glory was an extraordinary gift from him to us. God knew the extraordinary benefits that would come to us by understanding his character and his attributes, that is by understanding his glory, and so his desire was to impart that to us. And Jesus became a man in order to do that.

And one aspect of God's character that we see demonstrated in our text this morning was Jesus' profound humility. It's a humility that is evidenced in his response to the Pharisees' accusation. They say in *John 8:13*: "*You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.*" Jesus simply says in verse 14: "*I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going.*" Now, let me put Jesus' answer into context by suggesting how I might have answered that question if I was Jesus. If I was Jesus, you know, I might have said, "You don't get it. I'm the king of the world!" Except I probably would have said it more like that guy in *The Titanic*, "I'm the king of the world!" is what I would have said. I'm not only the king of the world, I'm the king of the Milky Way, which is part of the galaxy that this planet is part of, but you don't know that because you don't know what you don't know. "*I know where I come from and I know where I'm going.*" You also don't know that this galaxy contains over 100 billion stars and my universe has over 500 billion galaxies. And I created every one of them and I called them out by name and I am sustaining them moment by moment even while I stoop to even talk to you. You say I need two witnesses? Okay, witness number one, the universe is my witness. And witness number two, I am my own witness. Why? Because "*I know where I came from and I know where I'm going.*" And I would add and how dare you even begin to

question my witness of myself. But I'm not Jesus. And believe me, the world can be thankful for that.

But you know, the more I read Jesus' response, the more stunning it is to me the humility, the profound humility that Jesus is expressing. Jesus' response in verse 15 is to say this, he says: *"You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me."* You see, Jesus is telling them that they judge and when they judge, they judged what they think they know, but they judge by what they don't know, that is they judge according to the flesh. In fact there was only one person capable of passing perfect judgment and that's because he was the only one who knew all things perfectly, and that was Jesus, but at this time judgment was not his role. In *John 3:17* it says: *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.* Thus Jesus says in this instance, he says, *"I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, my judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me."*

So what Jesus is doing here is he's brilliantly addressing the Pharisees' need for two witnesses by saying everything I do has the dual witness of myself and my Father. So everything I do meets the

qualifications of Deuteronomy as well as he says in verse 17, he says: *"It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am One who bears witness of myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness of me."*

As the elders begin distributing the bread, I'd like us to take just a moment or two to consider the profound humility of Jesus Christ. Consider the proud arrogance of the questions that are being fired at him and consider his answers. Consider also this warning that God gives concerning communion. This is from *1 Corinthians 11:28-32*. God 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 drink in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* I say this every month, I say communion is extremely serious business and to enter into it in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster. If you are not absolutely confident that you're a child of the King or if you first need to be reconciled to your brother and sister before you bring your sacrifice to the altar, then as the elements are coming, just pass them by. I've said it before, nobody's going to look at you as strange or odd;

instead they may think you very wise. But you know, on the other hand, we can also make the mistake of thinking that unless we are spotlessly perfect we are unworthy to receive communion, and that too is a mistake. You see, being a child of the King doesn't mean that we don't sin, that we never fail. What it means is that when we do fail, we understand that we are aware that we've sinned because God's Spirit now lives inside us, it is the Holy Spirit convicting us. And so we grieve as children who know we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us. 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 being a child of the King doesn't mean that we are without sin. What it means is that when we sin, we understand we have an advocate with the Father. *1 John 2:1* says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* And so because we possess Jesus Christ's righteousness and not our own righteousness, we are free to eat from his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus has purchased for you with his blood. Take some time now to worship the one who truly knows where he came from and knows where he is going.

1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter, the 23rd verse says this: *For I*

received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Take and eat.

We've been looking at the humility of Christ and his willingness to even engage the Pharisees in this dialogue that he's engaged with them in. In verse 17 it says this: Jesus says: *"It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am the One who bears witness of myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."* Verse 19 then says of the Pharisees: *Then they said to Him, "Where is your father?"* That's not an innocent question. In fact, that's a vicious question. You see, for all of Christ's earthly ministry, he was dogged by the persistent rumor that he was the illegitimate son of a peasant woman whose marriage to Joseph took place after she had become pregnant, and that much is true. *Matthew 1:18* says this, it says: *Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived*

in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

So Joseph married Mary and as people do even today, their peers counted the months between their marriage and Jesus' birth and they concluded that Jesus had been conceived outside of the bounds of marriage. Today more than half of all children born to women under 30 are conceived outside of the bounds of marriage. So the social stigma attached to illegitimacy which used to be profound is no longer so, again just by sheer volume. I mean, basically our culture laughs at illegitimacy. Jesus' culture did not laugh at illegitimacy. *Deuteronomy 23:2* points out how seriously God took this, it says: *"No one of illegitimate birth may enter the LORD's assembly; none of his descendents, even to the tenth generation, may enter the LORD's assembly."*

The word "legitimate" means performing according to rules or regulations, and when it comes to childbirth, obviously in our culture and this place those rules have changed. So we don't get the force of the insult the Pharisees intended or the shame that was associated with illegitimacy when they said, *"Where is your Father."* You see, this question was a mocking, sneering attempt to demean Jesus as illegitimate. And Jesus once again, he's completely nonplussed in his response. This is what he says: *Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had*

known Me, you would have known My Father also." He spoke these words by the treasury, while teaching in the temple complex. But no one seized Him, because His hour had not come. Then He said to them again, "I'm going away; you will look for Me, and you will die in your sin. Where I'm going, you cannot come." So the Jews again said, "He won't kill himself, will he, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"

What is amazing in this dialogue is not only Jesus' humility in tolerating the absolute scorn that's coming from the Pharisees but it's his incredible long suffering patience and the calm, collected, and matter of fact way that he describes their fate. He just says, *"You will die in your sin. Where I'm going, you cannot come."* And then what follows is what we will call a dialogue of the deaf. You see, Jesus is engaging the very ones who are living proof of his own words in *Matthew 13:14* when Jesus said this, he said: *"Isaiah's prophesy is fulfilled in them, which says: 'You will listen and listen, yet never understand; and you will look and look, yet never perceive. For this people's heart has grown callous; their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes, otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts and turn back -- and I would cure them."* As I said, this is a dialogue of the deaf, and it's the dialogue of the deaf because the Pharisees have chosen to

"listen and listen, yet never understand." Their hatred for who Christ is has shut their ears and blinded their eyes.

Now, there are layers of religion and culture that tend to obscure how outrageous their response actually was, but even a brief look beneath the surface will reveal that their response is couched in scorn and ridicule and the vain conviction that they are the ones who are blessed of God and Jesus is this outlier worthy only of their disgust. Again, verse 21 says this: *Then he said to them again, "I'm going away; you will look for Me, and you will die in your sin. Where I'm going, you cannot come."* So the Jews said again, *"He won't kill himself, will he, since he says, 'Where I'm going, you cannot come'?"* Just to take this apart a little bit, in other words, what they're saying is the Pharisees are saying we're obviously the ones who everybody knows who are highly blessed of God and this Jesus, well, he's clearly someone who's going to be dying in his own sin as well, and since he's saying that we can't go where he is going and we know we're going into Abraham's bosom, well then it's likely that he's probably going to be killing himself because he's obviously going to Hades, and after all, we won't be going where he's going because we're the good ones and he's this illegitimate poser. Now remember, they are pouring out this invective on the King of the universe.

As the elders begin to pass out the cup, I want to just focus in on this dialogue a little bit. It's just astounding to me how Jesus once again is very matter of fact, and he sets them straight in verse 23, he says: *"You are from below," He told them, "I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."* So Jesus very calmly, very succinctly tells an incredibly hostile, mocking crowd the very same thing that we are charged to tell that crowd that's right outside the doors. *"If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."* If you do not believe that Jesus is who he said he was, you will die. That's an absolute fact. And it's a fact that applies to mocking Pharisees, polite atheists, religious worker bees, and indifferent evangelicals alike. In fact, it applies to anyone who denies the fact that he or she is completely and totally lost when it comes to being worthy at all for heaven. Nasty people die in their sins; nice people die as well, and every group in between.

Jesus Christ came to this planet to glorify his Father by rescuing and ransoming those of his sheep who knew that they could never perfectly meet even one requirement of the ten commandments. The Pharisees in this passage couldn't even remotely get past the very first commandment, *Exodus 20:3: "Do not have other gods beside*

me." God insists that our number one priority and the number one priority of everyone of his creatures, creatures who owe their very existence to him, is him. Any time we substitute anything as being as important or more important than our relationship with God, we create of that thing a god with a little "g," and we sin. We render ourselves unfit for heaven. The Pharisees had substituted their own rules, their own regulations, their own reputations for that of the true God, and they had become so blinded to their own wickedness that they openly mocked the very God that they claimed to be serving. Again verse 23: *"You are from below," He told them, "I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."* *"Who are you?" they questioned.*

You know, one way or another, by hook or by crook, by worship or by scorn, the Pharisees wound up at the one question every one of us is going to wind up with when it comes to Jesus Christ. The question is: "Who are you?" Once again, they came to that question dripping with sarcasm and scorn. It was more like, "Who are you?" Well, you can come to that question with fists raised or with your bitterness disguised by sarcasm or indifference, but you're going to find like Pharaoh did that you are never going to win when you are up against the very King of the universe who

says: *"I know where I came from and where I'm going. But you do not know where I come from and where I'm going."* And whether you're a Pharisee or an atheist, whether you're indifferent or belligerent, whether you're sarcastic or sincerely seeking, God will always be far more than one step ahead of you.

1 Corinthians 1:23 says: *But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is God's power and God's wisdom. See, if we are called of God, and if we are called of God, we are ready to meet him on our knees, and if we are called of God we would be able to hear Jesus when he answers, once again, the dialogue: "You are from below," He told them, "I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." "Who are you?" they questioned. "Precisely what I've been telling you from the very beginning," Jesus told them.*

He'd been speaking to them from the very beginning, but also from the very beginning they had not been listening. He's the king of the universe, the maker and sustainer not only of galaxies but of you and me. And for you and for me, he left heaven itself, he lived a perfect life as a man here on earth and he suffered not

only the scorn of those Pharisees but the absolute humiliation of his own creation stripping him naked, hanging him on a tree, mocking him while he bled out his life blood for us. And worse yet, he endured the rejection of his own heavenly Father whose perfect justice had no choice but to punish the evil Jesus had become as he went to the cross to bear your sins and mine. Just consider the humility, consider the patience, consider the love that drove him.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says: *For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift -- not from works, so that no one can boast.* Take a moment to consider God's gift to you.

1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter, the 25th verse says this, it 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."* Take and drink.

This is the time that I call heads, hands, and feet. It's the time where we speak of a practical application of what it means to remember Jesus Christ. And you know, Christmas is obviously a very unique time of year, it is a time when the world for a few brief days seems to very, very slightly, very cautiously let its guard

down just a little bit. You know, we have this war on Christmas, and the war on Christmas is proof that the enemy wants nothing whatsoever to do with even this minor concession. And most of the news that we hear these days comes about, you know, school systems that are getting sued by the ACLU because they have hymns in their Christmas programs or towns that are getting sued because they have nativity scenes and that sort of thing, and much of the battle really has to do with an ignorance of the law and people terrified that they're going to be stepping on other people's toes. But I would like to suggest something for the month of December. You know, I would like to suggest that each of us pray very strategically with the gift of this time that God has given to us, and one of the things that I would like to pray is that we would have the opportunity -- and you know, you're all going to be seeing your aunts, your uncles, your cousins, your friends and all of these kind of situations are going to come up and you know, folks say, well, how do I do this, how do I shoehorn the gospel into these social settings? How do I do it? May I suggest to you that this month we pray that God would give us the opportunity in conversation to just ask somebody, anybody, friend, cousin, whatever, what does Christmas mean to you? That's a -- that's as non threatening a question as you can ask anybody. And I'm suggesting this not as a means to shoehorn the gospel into whatever the response is. I'm saying ask whoever it is God calls you to ask

that question and then just sit back and ask God for the wisdom to hear them when they speak and to truly listen to what they are saying and to respond to what it is that you've heard rather than some pre-programmed moment of saying, okay, you've said your thing, now I'm going to say my thing. Just ask God for the wisdom to follow the conversation perhaps to an end where you would get the opportunity to share the gospel. Ask God for that privilege and then for the month of December, be on your toes when you have a social setting, when you have a social gathering, say God, is this the person that I'm to ask this question: What does Christmas mean to you? You know, they may say something cultural, they may say something about family, or they may say something about their ignorance. I have no idea what Christmas is about. Let's pray right now for opportunity in each of our spheres of influence, in each of the circles that we're going to be in in this month that God would give us a time and a place and a person for that question. Let's pray.

Father God, we're scattering in all different directions and will be scattered throughout the month of December and particularly we're going to be talking to friends and relatives and people that we often times don't get to rub shoulders with, and we're uniquely in a situation where the gospel can actually be discussed. Father, I want to pray for each of us the wisdom that we need and the

confidence that we need in your wisdom to simply ask you to direct them to the right person to ask this question: What does Christmas mean to you? Furthermore, Lord, I just -- I pray that you would give each and every one of us the wisdom and the ability to follow that course of -- of response and answer, the ability to just hear what the person is saying and to engage that person, and should by your grace and by your mercy we have an opportunity to present the good news that Jesus Christ became a man, God in the flesh, that he walked this earth, that he lived a perfect life and offered that life up on a tree so that we in our sin could exchange our sin for His righteousness, that we would have that opportunity, Lord, I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.