

Pastor Tom Mortenson

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Add to Your Faith Love

2 Peter 1:5-7

Prayer: *Father, once again we just, we thank you for this season, we thank you for this time, we thank you for the reminders constantly of the gift that you've given to us of your Son. Again, what an incredible, lifelong eternal gift that you've given us. Lord, we also want to thank you for the gift of your word that you've given to us as well and the gift of your Spirit. So this morning, Lord, as we're finishing up the series on 2 Peter, I pray that you would give us the presence of your Holy Spirit as we wrap this up, that you would again continue to open up your word, give us the ability to see it, to hear it, and to again make it of permanent value, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, like I said, this is our final look at 2 Peter 1:5-7 which says: *For this very reason, make every effort to add for 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. And last time out we looked at brotherly*

kindness, which is mutual affection, and we're speaking of a kind of love that we express within the body of Christ. This week we're going to look at love expressed to those who are outside the church, those who are basically outside of the kingdom of God.

How do we make every effort to add to your faith God's love for the world? Well, we call that love grace. And this morning we want to first look at how we express God's grace accurately, that is how we reveal what it is that God has done to show his love for the world. Secondly, we also want to understand our own place in this process, I mean, it is a far too easy thing to forget that we are all sinners saved by the very same grace that we are proclaiming. We want to look at how we remember what it is that God has given us in his grace. And finally, we want to recognize and utilize the inherent power that's in the gospel itself. Paul states it quite clearly in *Romans 1*. He says: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* We want to know how to get the ability to utilize that power, to release that power, to effectively express God's love and grace. And so this morning I'm going to be examining God's love and grace revealed, remembered, and released.

So first let's take a look at the love of God revealed. And right

off the bat we find out we have a problem here. You see, God reveals himself through multiple different channels, we have his word, we have his Son, we have his Spirit, we have his creation. And a huge part of that creation is the crown of his creation, which is you and me. We reveal who God is to the world. And of course the problem is how we do it. The question is do we accurately reflect to the world what God has revealed about himself or are we actually misrepresenting that revelation? I mean do we tell folks, "Smile, God loves you," or do we say, "Hey, you're going to burn in hell" or do we do something somewhere in the middle? I mean, wouldn't you want to know what God thinks about how we reveal his gospel? Well, thank God he didn't leave us to guess what he is thinking and he's given us some real hints as to what he thinks and how he thinks. Jesus used stories to take us into his and his Father's heart, and we call those stories parables. Well, Jesus told one that was an illustration of how he sees us and our rebellion toward him and his Father. It's the parable of the tenants in *Matthew 21*. I'm just going to read it to you. It says: *"Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.*

Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and we will have his inheritance.' And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

Well, this is Jesus's heart about how he and his Father sees us. And you might object to this, saying, well, wait a minute. This is Jesus talking about the religious leaders of his day, I mean, these -- he's talking about the priests, you know, the ones who had God's

revelation itself, these were the ones who truly believed that they were living lives that were separate and holy, apart from this sinful culture that surrounded them. But then you realize that that's an excellent description of us. I mean, we have God's revelation. We are the ones who are seeking to live separate and holy lives apart from a sinful culture. So much of what Jesus has to say here applies to us. You see, the key to accurately revealing the love of God is to be constantly aware that we are no more than sinners saved by grace.

Tim Keller once preached about this passage, and in it he put his finger on exactly why we reject God, why we actually flee from him and ultimately hate him until he overwhelms that hatred with his grace. And again, Jesus made that hatred crystal clear when he confronted the Pharisees. He said this in *John 15*, he said: *"If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But the word that is written in their law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'"* Well, here's what Keller suggests is the reason why. He says God is the landlord and we are the tenants. He's the investor, we are the tenant workers. However, Jesus tells us that we are tenant workers who resent our landlord because we want to be the landlord ourselves. And when the landlord sends servants to collect the fruit, they beat one,

they kill another, and they stone the third, and they do this twice. They hate the fact that they are not the landowners. They hate even more the idea that they owe the landlord anything, and so they beat, kill, and stone his servants. And God is telling us here the state of our hearts before we come to Christ. And what he tells us is I am your landlord. I am your owner. I am your ultimate authority. You do not answer to nobody, you answer to me. And in our natural state we just hate that. We want to be our own landowner. I mean the landowner is the rightful owner to the entire farm. He planted it, he put up the wall, he installed the winepress and the watch tower. And God's clearly trying to illustrate that he's the rightful owner of all of creation. He's telling us that none of creation is our doing and that none of it is a result of our efforts and work. God furthermore says that he's the ultimate authority over us because he has that right as creator. But we hate that authority. And the proof of how much we hate it and how desperately we cling to anything that will enable us to reject it can be found in the way that we as a culture have embraced the idea of evolution. I mean this is not a scientific theory that's accepted because it so perfectly fits the facts. This is in fact an extremely shaky and highly improbable theory that's been touted as fact because it enables us to reject the creator's authority. I mean, if evolution really is true, then there's really no need for a creator. And if you follow the

creation-evolution debate, you know that it grows more and more interesting every day as critiques and books and papers challenging evolution grow only to encounter blistering responses that are roughly akin to people encountering an apostate. Make no mistake about it, belief in evolution is a matter of faith. It's a deeply religious faith in the power of nothing.

Lynn Margulis is a member of the United States National Academy of Sciences and she's a biologist who wrote -- quote -- "the Darwinian claim to explain all of evolution is a popular half-truth whose lack of expletive power is compensated for only by the religious ferocity of its rhetoric." Jerry Fodor is a cognitive scientist at Rutgers University who wrote a book entitled *"What Darwin Got Wrong."* He stated in his book -- quote -- "There is something wrong, quite possibly fatally wrong, with the theory of natural selection." Raymond Tallis is a professor of medicine at the University of Manchester and a fellow of the Academy of Medical Science who wrote a book in 2011 entitled -- quote -- *"Aping Mankind: Neuromania, Darwinitis, and the misrepresentation of humanity."* The Discovery Center said of Tallis: "Tallis coined the term 'neuromania' to describe an ongoing media crusade telling the public that each 'new discovery' has finally demonstrated a purely material explanation for consciousness." What is remarkable about these critics of evolution is that none of them is even

remotely Christian. I mean, we've been led to believe that the only ones who object to the obvious truth of evolution are religious whackos. These folks give the lie to that idea. In fact all of the them are in the words of Mr. Fodor "outright, card-carrying, signed-up, dyed-in-the-wool, no-holds-barred atheists." Lynn Margulis was once married to the high priest of Darwinian evolution, Carl Sagan. And all of them have demonstrated remarkable courage, because to go against Darwinian evolution is to violate the cardinal rule of Western thought. And as Margulis described it, they become "persona non grata," which is the fancy Latin word of saying "person not appreciated." See, the response of Darwinian evolution is far more than a religious response, it is far more than just a religious response to a scientific truth. I mean these folks are howling at any attempt to challenge their view, and they do so with a religious fervor that mirrors anything you find in a tent revival. They intensely resent any challenges to their worldview. I mean you'd almost get a sense that in the evolutionary community, whether they realize it or not, that there's much more at stake than a fatally flawed theory.

I'll tell you what's genuinely at stake here. What's at stake here is who is the real owner of the vineyard. I mean if evolution is true, then the tenant workers can lay claim to all of creation because there really is no landlord, there really is no one

whatsoever to answer to. It's all the product of random chance, mutation and time. There's no ultimate authority that'll demand an accounting and the tenant workers don't have to answer to anyone. And after fifty years now, that view has gone essentially unchallenged. I mean, however, if creation actually is true, then there really is a landlord, and he will one day be coming by to collect his fruit. I mean that's the subtext that defines the entire creation-evolution debate, and it's also why the debate has grown increasingly more and more hysterical. It's because the stakes are so high. We are either the purposeless product of random chance mutation and billions and billions of years or we are creatures created by and answerable to a purposeful creator.

So we look at this parable and in this parable God is really talking about the state of our hearts, and he shows us that we are actually predisposed to hate the idea of creation because we're already born hating the landlord. I mean I've had numerous occasions where I've been able to sit down with unbelievers. I try to explain to them that they probably don't realize this, but they have an inherent hatred for God. You know, most people respond to that with absolute astonishment. They feel no emotional component of hatred towards God at all and yet almost always they describe their attitude towards God as something that most people would regard as one of the purer forms of hatred, and that is complete

indifference. Jesus himself viewed indifference towards him and the kingdom as far worse than hatred itself. He made that clear when he said to the church at Laodicea. He said: *"I know your works: You are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."* See, Jesus understood and accepted that the baseline response to him and his kingdom was hatred. And it was hatred because he understood the nature of the war that he and we are in. There is a binary choice between two kingdoms that every single person alive either consciously or unconsciously makes. And people outside the kingdom don't realize that they are not part of some vast neutral pool of people who don't have hard feelings one way or another towards God. They don't realize that they've already unconsciously made a commitment and a choice for this world as opposed to the kingdom. And having made that choice, they don't realize they have a natural antipathy towards things of the kingdom. And again, Jesus made that crystally clear when he was instructing the disciples. He said this in *John 15:18*, he said: *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."* Now to put this within the context of the parable, God says he sent his servants to remind us that we're not alone, that we are

still creatures under his authority, that is the authority of the owner of the vineyard. And our reaction was to beat one of his servants, to kill another, and to stone a third, and then we did it again a second time. But then, as Keller points out, the landowner does something that completely defies logic. I mean, the tenants reject the landlord, they beat and they kill, they stone his servants and instead of destroying them, what does the landlord decide to do? He decides, well, at least they'll respect my son. Do you get what God is trying to tell us here? I mean here is where the love of God is so extraordinary. The tenants here are not just minorly bad guys, they're not just somewhat rebellious. They've declared war on the landlord, and they've done it by butchering his servants. The landlord desperately wants to avoid sending in military assets to wipe them out, so desperate that he sends the most precious possession he has. It's his son. And knowing it's the landlord's son, they decide to kill him. The tenants hate the landlord. But there's one thing that they hate even more. They hate being reminded that they are not landowners and that they, too, are going to answer someday to the landlord.

And that brings us to the heart of the problem about how we reveal what it is that God has done to show us his love for the world. See, God says it's your job, your job is to be the servants who have been sent to the vineyard. Our job is to reveal the heart of

God. I mean so how do you do that? Do you go up to the vineyard, do you put a big smile on your face and say, "Smile, the landlord loves you"? I mean if you did that, you'd be ignoring not only the way they treated the other servants but also the reason why they treated them that way. I mean after all, the servants were surely not beaten, killed, and stoned for a message that consisted of saying that the landlord's nothing but love. That message threatens no one, it costs nothing, and it demands no respect whatsoever. No, no, no, these workers had to have pointed out that there was an accounting that was coming, that it was the landlord's vineyard, the landlord's wall, the landlord's watchtower, the landlord's winepress as well as the fruit that the landlord was entitled to and that one day he was going to come to collect it. That's what enraged the tenants. It was also his demand that they respect his son. He thought they would at least respect him, and they butchered him. Jesus the storyteller says: *"When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"* They said to him, *"He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."* Well, the people hearing the story recognize that the landlord would be right and just to -- quote -- *"put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants,"* and yet he refuses to exercise that judgment.

So here's our first challenge. How do us as servants go about the task of revealing that kind of love? You see, our God is the landlord. He does own every single molecule in this universe down to the very breath in the lungs of the ones who are cursing him. He's also going to demand an accounting of all of us and it is our job to reveal that honestly. And it just might get you beaten, killed, or stoned, but that goes with the territory. Paul says in *2 Timothy*: *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* I mean "everyone" means everyone. And if no one's ever once said a cross eyed word to you about your faith, maybe you need to watch out. Maybe you're misrepresenting the Master. You know the danger doesn't simply end there. We can take the opposite tact just like the Pharisees, did. We could look down our holy noses at all the rotten tenant workers and ignore the fact that all of us believers, every one of us, are all former tenant workers. Absent God's grace, every one of us would be leading the charge to beat, kill, and stone the servants and the son. The reason that we are now servants and not rebels is not because we had the good sense to change our minds. It's because God gave us the gift of his grace. *Ephesians 2* says: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not of your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

And again, that leads us to challenge number two. We are believers first because God has revealed to us his matchless grace. And our ability to reveal it to others depends in a large part on how well we remember that grace. You may say, well, I was raised a Christian, I mean, one of the blessings of being raised in a Christian home is that you don't even remember having been a rebellious worker. But God says all of us, every one of us was born that way. In *Ephesians 2* he said: *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience -- among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

You know, if your life has never spilled out into open rebellion, you may have no memory of it because God's grace may have contained it, but that doesn't mean that you or I are out of the woods. Like I've said, there really is two ways to express a hatred for the landlord. One way is through open rebellion and wickedness, it's by beating and killing and stoning the servants, but there's another way. It's the religious way. You see, if you actually see yourself as growing the fruits and harvesting them and pressing them and doing everything just right because you think you can make

the landlord your debtor, then you're doing the same thing in a religious way. I lead a good life, I lead a moral life, I go to church, I give my tithes, therefore the landlord owes me. He owes me my health, he owes me my wealth, my family, my prosperity. If you find yourselves thinking this way, it's probably because you failed to remember grace, failed to remember just who we are and who the landlord is. And again, Jesus has another story to tell us. Listen to this. He says this in *Luke 17*. He says: *"Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"* So the question is do you see yourself as an unworthy servant just doing your duty or do you feel inclined to recline at table and be served? I mean there's a reason why Jesus said those words. It's because he knows our hearts. He knows how easy it is for us to think we deserve "attaboys" for doing what is really only our duty. He knows how easy it is for former tenants to forget to remember who they once were.

You know, most of us know what it's like to be watching a famous

person trashing Christians and Christianity, I mean, I used to -- I hate to admit this, I used to watch Bill Maher and the guy used to just drive me crazy. I would just watch him and get furious. He used to make my blood boil. And then I realized one day, I've gotten grace that he never got. And that really changes everything. I just saw this past week, I saw an article about a TV personality Ainsley Earhardt who was being mocked for her faith by the famous atheist Howard Stern. And I just marveled at the response here. This was an article in *Fox News*. Let me just read to you what it says. It says: "'*Fox & Friends*' host Ainsley Earhardt revealed her surprising reaction after shock jock Howard Stern mocked her faith in a special holiday edition of *Fox Nation*'s 'Ainsley's Bible Study.' During a radio segment last May, Stern went after the *Fox & Friends* host, mocking her faithfulness -- which she speaks of extensively on her *Fox Nation* show. Stern's comments were directed towards a specific episode of the faith-based show where Earhardt opens up about a challenge she was facing at the time and how she felt the presence of God was guiding her to peace. 'My whole Bible study watched his interview and we all felt sorry for him and we all prayed for him,' Earhardt said. 'We love him. We want him to know Christ. That's it.' Earhardt was joined on 'Ainsley's Bible Study' by 'Hannity' host Sean Hannity, who had a strong response to Stern's comment's. 'Honestly he was like totally making fun of your Bible study,' Hannity said.

'What was really interesting to me is I actually viewed it for you as you had something that he didn't have.'" And that's exactly what we're talking about. "'I've interviewed Howard on radio and TV,' Hannity continued, 'I admired him a lot but what I realized [is that] he does not understand, as smart, talented and gifted [as he is], he doesn't have what you have -- which is he doesn't seem to think ever about the majesty of God or the need for a spiritual component.'"

Now, whatever you think of these folks as political commentators, the fact is spiritually they got that a hundred percent right. Whenever we get angry at people who are acting like tenants, God has the right to say to us, you're looking at yourself without my grace, because we are all unworthy servants. And every time we get angry at people acting like tenants, we forget to remember where we've come from. You know, David understood that in *Psalm 103*, he says: *Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits -- who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion.* You know, many of us remember being yanked up out of the pit that we were all headed for. Paul says this in *1 Corinthians 6*: *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the*

sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. So what he's saying is that some of you were wicked tenants and some of you were self-righteous tenants, but all of us were washed, sanctified, and justified in Christ.

So by now I hope you realize the nature of the love that we are to have for those outside of the church. I mean first we have to understand that God's grace revealed is a lot simpler, a lot more severe and a lot more complicated, I should say, than these simple slogans that so many people use. I mean, we can smile and say, "God loves you," and it ignores our rebellion and God's wrath and holiness and judgment. We could also say, "Hey, you're going to burn in hell," and that ignores the love of God who sent his Son to die for the rebels that spurned him. I mean neither statement paints an accurate picture of where non-believers stand because both of those statements are woefully incomplete. I mean they're sound bites rather than statements. But unfortunately our culture now lives on sound bites. So if you have a sound bite opportunity, okay, well, what do you say? Well, before we say anything, we need to picture reality as Jesus did, and that is we are unworthy

servants, telling rebels tenant workers about their landlord. We reveal the love and justice of God. And secondly we are in no position to reveal this grace unless we remember the grace that we once walked in. I mean, Jesus's parable was directed at a specific group of tenant workers. It was the religious leadership. We were the ones who looked down their nose at -- quote -- "sinners."

Well, it's our job to bring the good news of the kingdom to sinners, knowing that we are no more than fellow sinners saved by grace. And I'd be lying if I told you that I don't frequently think and am frequently tempted to think and act exactly like the Pharisees did. To wag my finger and tisk away at all the wickedness that we see on TV, on social media, and in the every day interactions we have with our neighbors. And you can see these folks in either of two different ways: You can see them as a demonstration of how the enemy of our souls enslaves us or you can see them as a means of showing how much better you are than they are. I mean one view makes you a servant; the other makes you a Pharisee, and it all depends on whether or not you remember grace.

And so finally, how do we put all of this together? How do we accurately reveal God's grace while we're remembering who we are? How do we get the ability to effectively express God's love and grace to those outside the church? Well, actually the answer to that is very simple. The answer is we can't do anything. To

paraphrase Galatians 3: *Having begun in the spirit do we now go forward by the flesh?* You know what it takes to realize God's power, to really minister to those who are outside of the church? It takes weakness. It takes acknowledged weakness. God's strength is made perfect in what? In weakness. I don't have the knowledge or the wisdom or the ability to love those outside the church, but I have a mandate to do so. I am under orders to love them and so are you. Practically speaking, here's how I would go about it. Number one, first I need to see every non-believer that I meet as a person in desperate need, regardless of whether or not they understand that. Secondly, I need to recognize that he or she is a rebel tenant worker at heart and buried under layers and layers of civility and politeness or right there under my nose is someone who fears and hates the landowner. He also hates and fears the accounting that he knows he's going to eventually demand. So third, I remember my own former days as a rebel tenant worker and the grace that rescued me. And all of that comes to one basic conclusion, which is fourth, we need to pray. I mean I never cease to pray for every new non-believer that I meet. Could it be, Lord, that you have chosen this person? Could it be, Lord, that I have the privilege of pointing him to eternal life? Could it be, Lord, that before the foundations of the world you purposed for us to meet? I pray that prayer all the time. Sometimes my prayer is just two words: Lord, help. I have no idea what I'm doing. I

can't do this on my own. I mean, I never meet somebody new without presupposing that God has designed this meeting. And lastly, I speak the truth in love. You know, sometimes that's very little and sometimes it's a great deal. It all depends on the person that I'm speaking to. But I'll tell you this, I don't have to fret, I don't have to worry about closing the sale or making the person say "the sinner's prayer" because I realize the truth of *1 Corinthians 3:7* which says: *So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.* You see, it is his power that we release, and that power is made perfect in weakness.

So my question this morning is not really about technique, it's more about purpose. I mean my question really is what contact do we have with the tenant workers outside these doors? What contact do you have with the world that is outside the church? Do you give yourself opportunities to share the gospel, to bear the light where the light is least seen? You know, God did not say, let your light so shine among men that have all the other light as well so that we can't really tell whose light is whose. I mean the scripture says: *"Let your light shine before others, so they that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*

That's a light that's shining in darkness. I think we have this bizarre idea that it's godly not to associate with sinful people. That's just what the Pharisees thought. Listen to what Paul said

in 1 Corinthians 5, he said: *I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people -- folks, just stop right there and they don't keep reading. It goes on to say: Not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world, but now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler -- not even to eat with such a one.* What Paul is actually saying here, I told you not to associate with openly sinful Christians. And whether it's sex or greed or partying, drinking, swindling or worshiping idols, if anyone calls himself a brother or sister and engages in such open blatant sin, you and I are not to give him the comfort of pretending everything is okay when his or her soul seems to be at risk. But Paul continues, he says, you've extrapolated to include everyone including nonbelievers in what I was just saying. Paul says, I didn't mean at all the people of this world who are immoral, greedy, swindlers, and idolaters. Is he saying that we are really to associate with those kind of people? And the answer is absolutely yes, we are. But it's yes up to a point. Well, that's a tough one. How do you know where the point is? Do you know where you must stop associating with these people? Do you know where that point is? When they stop breaking your heart. That's when you know.

Many years ago Dan and Ben were telling me about a party that they went to with their old high school chums. They went to the party, after they came back, I said, "How was it?" They said, "It was awful. Ben said the language was awful, the drunkenness was ridiculous, the coarseness and the crudity was off the charts." And then Ben said something that I thought was interesting, he said, "I was almost in tears over it." I said, "That's exactly how Christ wants you to respond. Exactly." And both Dan and Ben had a very fruitful ministry there, just telling folks that there's more to life than this. That's what being a light in a dark place is all about.

And so you have to ask yourself this question this morning, are you ever a light for somebody's darkness? Do you administer the love and the grace of God to a rebel tenant worker to the world outside of your Christian community? And when you do that, do you reveal what God has revealed to you or do you tend to cut corners? Do you remember that you, yourself, were once a rebel tenant worker? Do you release the power of God acting through weakness by prayer? Well, if you do, then you have indeed made every effort to add to your faith love. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for your word, I thank you for all of the grace and wisdom that you have piled into this humble servant Peter, a

fisherman, not known to have too much brilliance and yet you've given him this extraordinary brilliance that he's passed on to us. And Father, I pray that you would give us this day the understanding that we need to have as we attempt to bring your love to the world outside these doors. Lord, give us the ability to reveal who you are, the ability to remember who we are, and the ability through prayer to release the power of the gospel itself. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.