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Jesus Confronts the Demons

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, we just again thank you for who you are, and I thank you for just the time of the year that we can celebrate the gift of Christmas, Lord. Thank you for being that gift. Thank you for what you've done for us. Thank you for the cross. And Lord, this morning we're going to spend some time speaking about that and what you've done for us at the cross and I just pray for an extra measure of your Holy Spirit, an extra measure of your grace and the ability to understand at an even greater depth what you've given to us, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, this time it's the second Sunday of the month because of the snow last week, so this is the day that we're going to remember Christ and his cross. We do that by looking at this scripture in Matthew 26 where Jesus met with his disciples for a final Passover supper with them. And this is *Matthew 26:26-29*. It says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it*

to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." So Jesus took the bread and the wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood, and then he asked the disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup so that they might symbolically do the same thing, eat his flesh and drink his blood. He then asked them to repeat the remembrance of His sacrifice on a regular basis and that's what we call "the Lord's table." And so we celebrate it, we celebrate it monthly, and we do that by meditating on what Christ himself has done for us on the cross, by examining ourselves, asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, by confessing our sins, and then by participating 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."*

Well, we're in the gospel of Mark, and as I mentioned before, all of the four gospels really present different facets of who Jesus is. Matthew presents Jesus as king, Mark presents him as servant, Luke presents Jesus as man, and John presents Jesus as God in the flesh. And because Mark presents Jesus as servant, he gives lots of very precious little details of many of the different instances

in Jesus's public ministry that the other gospels would spend a lot of time on. It's very short and it's very truncated and the book kind of opens up, it opens with Jesus's baptism and then it directly goes to the temptation in the desert. And again, Jesus is presented as servant and you can see that in the way it's described in *Matthew 1*. It says: *Immediately the Spirit drove Him -- that's driving Jesus -- into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days tempted by Satan and was with the wild beasts; and then the angels ministered to him.* We spent last time looking at the temptation in the desert. Jesus in that desert represented the second Adam. Just as the enemy was successful in causing the first Adam to fall in the garden, so too he thought he could seduce or confuse or trip up this second Adam that he met in the desert. Well, with Adam, he succeeded; with Jesus, he failed miserably.

One of the things that I speak of constantly, actually one of the defining aspects of our lives is the fact that we are right in the middle of a cosmic war that's been going on forever between two kingdoms: the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. And Jesus's foray into the desert was his initial confrontation as God in the flesh with the dark kingdom. It certainly wasn't his first contact, I mean, we look back into the fall of Adam in Genesis 3. We see there God promising that one day in the future he would take

on flesh and come after the dark kingdom on our behalf. After Adam and Eve had fallen, they're meeting with God and he's telling them the consequences of what's taken place and God says to Satan at that point in *Genesis 3:15*, he says: *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* God is speaking about this battle that's to come thousands of years in the future and God said the enemy's going to strike a blow at God's heel but he would crush the enemy's head. That's just what happened at the cross. God himself was staggered by a blow from the enemy that wound up costing him his life. I mean the battle was lost when Jesus died but the war was won when he rose from the dead. Everything about Jesus' contact with the god of this world was always within the context of war. And so Mark's gospel takes us from this confrontation in the desert to the opening salvos in Jesus's public ministry in the war that will take Jesus to the cross. And it starts with Jesus preaching the gospel and announcing that the kingdom is at hand. This is *Mark 1:14*. It says: *Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*

Now it's been about a year since Jesus's return from the desert.

John the Baptist is now in prison and Jesus is beginning his assault on the enemy's kingdom in earnest. And so his first order of business is the calling of his disciples. And we pick up on that in verse 16. It says: *As He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him. And when He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.* Now you might get a sense from reading that this was just kind of an instantaneous thing, but as I said, Jesus has been interacting with these men for almost a year now but now Jesus senses it's time for a clean break, it's time for an all-out assault on the kingdom of darkness and it's about to begin. We pick up on verse 21. It says: *Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching for He thought them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.* It's telling us Jesus taught with an authority that was nothing less than astonishing. It was not as if some stranger just wandered into the synagogue and started speaking. He was known to these people. I mean it was customary to read the law and then to

begin teaching and commenting upon it. This is the form that Jesus used to begin his teaching. But immediately those who were in the temple recognized something vastly different about the way that Jesus taught and the way they had always been taught before. It was this matter of authority.

David McKenna points out that any time anyone speaks with authority is because they have some antecedent source of authority that they can refer to. I mean a professor can speak with his great knowledge as the source of his authority. A military man or a police officer or even a government official can refer to his delegated authority for the source of what he is saying. But Jesus's claim was altogether different. See, the authority that he spoke with was astonishing because God himself was now speaking. I mean there's no need for a derivative authority when you are the ultimate authority. And why shouldn't people be astounded? I mean the King of the universe, the one who had assumed human flesh was now directly speaking in his home synagogue from the book that he had created, inspired, and now clearly had committed to memory. You're literally hearing the author not just of the Bible but of time and space. The creator of the planets and the stars and mountains and oceans and nature itself is teaching from a book that he said was the source of his communication with us.

Now as obscure and as uneventful as this gathering that took place in the temple appeared, you have to understand that on a spiritual plane, this is a huge shot across the bow of the kingdom of the evil one. And it was a kingdom who up to this point had firm control over the entire earth. *1 John* tells us: *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* This is a power and a control the enemy had no intention of giving up easily. So there in this same congregation amongst all the people sits not just one but a slew of demons having inhabited some poor soul who happens to be sitting there, and they recognize the one who is speaking as the one who their leader had tried to attempt to engage in the desert and who had lost. They recognize that he's now become an existential threat. At the same time they also recognize that they are completely and utterly powerless to do anything about him. We pick up on verse 23. It says: *Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who you are -- the Holy One of God!"* Well again, if you look at the pronouns, you recognize this is not an individual, this is a group of demons that is inhabiting this person. *"Let us alone!"* they say. *"Did you come to destroy us?"* Then their apparent spokesman says, *"I know who you are -- the Holy One of God!"* Make no mistake about it, these demons know their bibles, they know their theology quite

well, they know exactly who Jesus is. And when James wanted an example of the uselessness of empty faith, he pointed to those very demons and he said this in *James 2*, he said: *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe -- and shudder!* No doubt they were shuddering as they begged Jesus to let them alone, when they asked him, *"Did you come to destroy us?"*

Take a moment to consider why these demons are shuddering and just what that means to those of us still living in the middle of this spirit war that's taking place between the kingdoms. I think it was C.S. Lewis who said there are two great errors that people make concerning demons. One is to see them everywhere and the other is to see them nowhere. And there's no one who knows more about demons than Jesus. I mean he's just returned from soundly defeating Satan in the desert and his minions know that they are outranked, outnumbered, and outmaneuvered by someone who's capable of destroying them. I mean, *"Did you come to destroy us?"* they ask. Many a time I've had folks tell me how frightened they are of spirits and demons and all of these type of things. I like to take them to the scriptures such as these. I point out that in every single instance in scripture where there's an evil spirit or a demon who has a confrontation with Jesus, the results are always the same. The demon is either groveling or he's begging for mercy or he's defiantly acquiescing to what he clearly sees as a vastly

superior power. And this is precisely what we see in this first encounter that Jesus has in this synagogue with the demons. This is verse 25. It says: *But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."* Well, just a few chapters later in Mark's gospel we're going to find the same incident or another incident repeated, where Jesus is confronting the demoniac of the Gadarenes. This is just four chapters later in *Mark 5*. It's another confrontation described. Let me just read it to you. It says: *And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. How would you like to encounter this guy in a dark alley? This is probably one of the most terrifying people anyone could ever encounter, I mean he lives in a graveyard, he's bound with chains which he periodically rips to pieces and he spends all of his time screaming and cutting*

himself. He sees Jesus and he starts sprinting towards him screaming. But listen to what he's screaming. It says: *And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me."* You see the spirits in this poor man are clearly terrified, but they're terrified of Jesus. So were the spirits inhabiting the man that Jesus encounters as he launches his public ministry. I mean, just try to picture the many different levels that Jesus is operating on here. I mean here he is, he's training his disciples and the others in the synagogue and at the same time he's throwing down this gauntlet to an unseen host of demons who have invaded the synagogue and he's overwhelming them with his sheer authority and then he's casting them out. The congregation has never seen anything like this before. They are stunned and it says: *For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey Him.* I would never dare nor would I ever want to face a demon on my own. They are far too clever and far too powerful for the likes of me.

We have a description in the book of Jude of a confrontation that takes place between an angel -- not just an angel, Michael the archangel and Satan, and it demonstrates that not even something as powerful as the archangel Michael would dare address Satan on his

own. *Jude 1:9* says: *But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."* Well, my approach to demons is exactly the same as Michael's and it's recognizing that they are incredibly powerful and dangerous creatures, but it's also knowing that in Christ, we have the ultimate weapon. Just picture them quivering before him and me kind of standing confidently behind Jesus with arms folded, maybe a little smirk on my face as I'm watching them cower before Jesus, because I know that my Lord is a terror to them. See, by myself I am no match whatsoever for them but I'm quite confident that as long as I stay in Christ, I need fear nothing and no one.

And so we pick up on the text at verse 28. It says: *And immediately his fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee. Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.* So here again we see Jesus' authority extending, it's extended to his teaching, his exorcising of demons and now his healing of the sick, namely Simon Peter's wife. This was so astounding, it could not be kept silent.

As the elders begin to pass out the bread, I want us to consider the authority of Christ. *Who, though he was in the form of God, 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 found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

As the bread is being distributed, I want us to again consider the warning that God gives us in *1 Corinthians 11*. He says this: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.*

And once again, I send out the warning that communion is extremely serious business and to enter into communion in an unworthy manner as to literally court disaster. And so I plead with you, if you're not absolutely confident that you are a child of the King or if you haven't presented your sacrifice to the altar because you have something against your brother or sister, if you haven't by faith trusted Christ as your Savior, then please just pass the elements on when they come to you. As I've often said, no one's going to think you strange. They may instead think you wise. But again, every time I

say that, I've got to think of the other side of that and the other side is thinking that you have to be perfect in order to receive communion. The enemy loves that mistake as well. You see, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin and it doesn't mean that you never fail, it means that you recognize when you do fail that salvation is a gift. It's a gift that you have been given that nobody is capable of earning. And once again I repeat this quote from Dane Ortlund that I repeat every month because it so perfectly sums up the attitude we need to have. He says, "In the kingdom of God the one thing that qualifies you and is knowing you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." It also means that when we fail we recognize that we have sinned because we have the Spirit of God now living inside us. We have God's Holy Spirit convicting us of sin and so we grieve and we grieve as children who have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us. 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 being a child of the King doesn't mean you are sinless, it doesn't mean you're spotless, it means you understand that if we do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, someone in heaven itself speaking on our 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.* And

that's the key. Because we have Jesus's righteousness, it belongs to us by faith, it's not our righteousness that we present to God, it's his, and if you have his righteousness, you are then free to eat from his table. So if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased for you. He lived the life we were supposed to live and he died the death we all deserved to die so that in our place, we could be made worthy of heaven, so we too could have the fullness of Christ and his authority dwelling bodily within us. Think for a moment on that.

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

Like I said, Jesus' authority and his power could not be kept silent. And just as he knew it would, his fame started to become a huge problem. Many times when Jesus healed someone, he told them to be silent about it because he knew precisely the nature of the mission that he was on: He was here to preach the gospel. Luke's gospel makes that clear. It describes Jesus's proclamation at the very beginning of his public ministry. It's Luke's view of the same thing that Mark is talking about. And again, Luke describes

him, he's in the temple, he's reading the Torah, he's reading from the book of Isaiah, and having completed the reading he then states his mission. He says this in *Luke 4:18*. He says: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed."* That's what Jesus came to do. I mean but he knew full well that his exercise of authority and power over sickness and disease was going to change the thrust of his mission from the eternal to the temporary. See, the crowds are now going to be seeking him out not for the eternal freedom of their souls but instead for the temporary care and feeding of their bodies. Just a few verses past our text this morning we find Jesus ordering someone, again, somebody's healed, to remain silent, and the reason why is obvious. This is verse 45 of *Mark 1*. He says: *But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.* This was not a problem that was ever going to go away, and believe it or not, it was not good news, I mean, these folks weren't really seekers. I mean in a manner of speaking they were freeloaders. I mean later on we see Jesus recognizing their motivation, and he says this in *John 6*, it says: *Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but*

because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." You see, Jesus was laser focused on his mission and he also knew full well that the enemy was highly adept at shape shifting and he could easily be the one moving the crowds to seek temporary band-aids instead of permanent cures. But he couldn't stop this news from spreading like wildfire. I mean the crowds are growing larger and larger and more and more desperate people are lining up to be healed. And we pick up at verse 32, it says: *At evening when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him. Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. And when they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."* Well as the crowds are growing greater and greater, Jesus does something once again that is astounding, something that we can see easily with this 2,000 years of hindsight that we now have. However his disciples at this point can only see the temporary, and so Jesus does what God often does with us, he confounds them. I mean Peter says to him, "Everyone's

looking for you" and what does Jesus say in response? It says: *He said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."* What? I mean no doubt this is probably the first of many times that the disciples would be utterly flabbergasted at Jesus' response. Are you kidding me, Jesus? I mean can you see how well this is going? The crowds are huge. People are getting healed, they're recognizing your power and your authority, and they're all desperate to be healed. All you say, it's time to go? Are you being heartless, Jesus? I mean don't you realize that you're leaving many, many sick people still in their sickness? Well, Jesus understood something that would take his disciples years to understand, and the fact is that every single one of Jesus' hearers was broken in a way that had eternal consequences, and only Jesus knew the extent of those consequences. You see, every single one of them and us was on our way to a Godless eternity outside the presence of God because every one of us was born broken, fallen and sinful. Jesus alone was able to take on the penalty of your sin and my sin by laying down his perfect life as a substitution for my life of sin. And the miracle that Jesus was offering to virtually everyone who heard him wasn't just a temporal body made temporarily whole, it was a soul set free from death by the payment that Jesus would make for it on the cross. Jesus knew that every one of the bodies that he was about to heal and restore was going to eventually die, and that he was

here to solve the problem of death eternally. See, Jesus knew exactly why he was here. It was to glorify his Father by rescuing hopelessly lost sinners. It was to transform hearts and to shape and to mold us into his image for the glory of his Father and nothing was more important than that, not even physical sickness.

If you're a child of God, you're going to run into the very same confounding circumstances that the disciples found themselves in. You see, oftentimes God's goal for us and our goals for ourselves, they just don't line up. God sees us and he sees our lives from eternity's perspective. He's using our time on earth to shape and mold us uniquely into the image of his Son and Hebrews tells us of Jesus: *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.* See, God can and will do things in our lives that are designed to benefit us eternally at the expense of our temporal comfort, and oftentimes, just like the disciples, we are confounded because more often than not they entail suffering. Romans 5 tells us: *Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance.* James tells us: *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.* And Peter tells us: *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith -- more precious than gold that*

*perishes though it is tested by fire -- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. God says, hey, folks, I am prepping you for eternity. I'm prepping you for eternity through trials and difficulties and suffering so that you can have a faith that's more precious than gold, a faith that redounds in praise and honor and glory when Jesus is revealed. And by and large we say hey, no thanks. If that's a blessing you can it give to somebody else. We react just like the disciples did. See, the disciples could only see the temporal success that was right in front of their faces. I mean the crowds were there, the healing was there, the glory was there for the taking. Why in the world would you ever leave that for some other town, especially when you know you're doing so much good? You see, Jesus understood that the temporary was overwhelming the eternal. And that's the exact same problem that we face today. We're stuck in time, we look at our lives from a temporary perspective. And God insists that's upside down. He says in 2 Corinthians 4, he says: *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* I mean Paul is saying, hey, those things that you can see, those things that you can experience, you can taste and touch, those things are temporary. The things that you can't see are eternal.*

You know we're coming to the end of the year 2019. If you're anything like me, you're just astounded by how fast that happened. I'm amazed. I'm just absolutely amazed. I mean we know with some degree of certainty where we're going to be on New Year's Day at the start of the year 2020. Here's my question for you this morning: Where do you suppose you're going to be on New Year's Day of 3020? Make it 4020. Okay? See, our brains don't even go there. I mean who even thinks 2,000 years in the future? God does. God knows exactly where we'll be and he knows precisely what we're going to be doing. And much of the way that he operates in our lives is designed not to give us our best life now, as Joel Osteen says, but to give you your best life when it really matters and that's in eternity with him. When Paul tells us to focus on the eternal rather than temporary, when he said that, this very day was 2,000 years in his future. Here it is. I mean God knew 2,000 years ago that we'd be reading these words today. Is it not reasonable to conclude that God might do things in your life and my life precisely because his view of time is not broken into these tiny little 80- or 90-year blocks, which he rightly sees as a mist or a vapor because they fly by so quickly? You see, he loved us enough to become one of us and then he lived out his life perfectly only to offer it up on our behalf, and he's told us he's gone to prepare a place for us. And he says where he is, we are going to be because he wants to spend eternity with you and me. And he

wants us prepared ahead of time for glory.

As you take the cup, as it begins to be distributed, please, I want you to spend some time this morning just thinking about times in the past where God has confounded you, maybe times in the present where he's confounding you even today, and ask yourself, just what is God trying to do? What is the goal here? Is it seen or is it unseen? Is it transient or is it eternal? Spend some time thinking about God's plans for you in the year 4020.

1 Corinthians 11:25 says this: In the same way also he 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, where we try to think of something practical that represents our remembrance of Christ. And again, I just want to go back to what it means to be confounded. It was over 40 years ago, I won't say how long, how much more than 40 it was because it has to do with one of my kids, Elisa who was at that time under 2. And she had come back from the doctor and the doctor said she has infant hip dysplasia. If you know what that means, that means her feet are pointing inwards. So back then, I don't know what it is now, but back then the treatment

was this horizontal metal bar that had little shoes on it and you put their little feet in it and it pronated their feet outwards. Simple enough thing to say but when you're under two, and your parents who you love and you trust and you care for suddenly say, guess what, you get to get tortured every night for the next six months or so. Just picture what's going on inside her little brain. She's saying I thought these people loved me! I thought they cared for me! What they're doing now is they're making me extremely uncomfortable and I'm in a situation of saying, well, let me explain to you what infant hip dysplasia is all about, Elisa. It's not going to work. So what do you do? You only have one choice. You have to trust in something that's confounding. Elisa didn't have any choice but to trust that mom and dad loved her and what they were doing was for her good. And what mom and dad were doing was not looking at the present, which was miserable for her, but looking at what it would do in the future. Well, just extrapolate from that. Picture God your Father loving you enough to say these things are going to be painful, they're going to be confounding, but they're for your future, they're for that eternity that I'm going to spending with you which I cared so much about that I died for. Listen, I know what it's like to be confounded. I lived here with you. And I went to the cross completely stripped of everything in order to purchase eternity for you. You think I care enough? And so when these happen, we have to think to what is

going to be happening in the future.

I'd love to propose a toast. I'd love to propose -- this is going to sound ridiculous, but in the year 4020, I would love to have a get together of this church, everybody who can get back and say, remember 2,000 years ago you mentioned that thing? Well, it's 2,000 years now. And we'll have a toast and we'll say remember when we were on earth in Port Jervis and we cared about all of these things that seemed to make such a big deal that now amount to next to nothing? Well, God cared back then and was willing to confound us back then, but now we get it. We don't necessarily get it now. We will get it in the year 4020. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you that we have nothing to go on but your promise that you love us. But oh Lord, how you back that promise up. You came, you brought us the first Christmas, God becoming man, and you lived your life among us perfectly and then you offered that life up as a sacrifice for us. You loved us enough to do that. And now you ask us to trust you when things are confounding. Lord, we see we get it, we get the disciples, we get how amazed they were and how confounded they were. Lord, you're just not doing it the way we think you should. And lots of times in our lives, Lord, you don't do it the way we think you should. We get confounded. So I pray that you would give us the ability to look not just to the

near future but the distant future and to understand that you are doing a work in our lives for eternity's sake. We thank you for that, and we praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.