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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Do Not Let Your Hearts be Troubled

John 14:1-3

Prayer: *Father, we just again thank you and praise you for the precious blood of your son and we just thank you for the gift that it is, the immeasurable gift that it is, and Lord, we thank you again for this day that we set aside to focus in on what it is you've done for us at the cross. And we just thank you for being willing to offer up your precious blood for our sins. This morning, Lord, as we again open up your book and look into one other aspect of it, one tiny aspect of it, I pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, I pray that you would guide us into your truth and again, that it would be of permanent value. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, once again it's the first Sunday of the month and as we've just said, this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he celebrated with his disciples one last Passover, and it's described in Matthew 26. 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, he took the wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. He then asked them to repeat this on a regular basis, and this is what we call the Lord's table, and we celebrate it once a month. We do that by meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus Christ 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, as you probably know, we've been following the life of Jesus and we've actually worked our way up to the 14th chapter of the gospel of John. And that chapter opens up with a simple six-word statement by Jesus to his disciples. He says this in *John 14:1*: *"Let not your hearts be troubled."* Well, this is a statement that begs, I mean, positively begs for a context, because in the last

chapter, in chapter 13, Jesus had three different bombshells that were certain to trouble the hearts of his disciples. The first bombshell Jesus told them that one of them would betray him. This is back in *John 13:21*. It says: *After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."* The second bombshell he told them that he was going to be leaving them. This is *John 13:33*, he says: *"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, where I am going you cannot come."* And thirdly, he told them Peter was going to deny him three times. This is *John 13:38*: *Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times."*

So here we have Jesus having told the disciples in chapter 13 these three deeply, deeply troubling things, then opens up chapter 14 by saying, *"Let not your hearts be troubled."* And I think we can call that a non sequitur. A non sequitur is a conclusion that just doesn't follow the premises. It's sort of like saying betrayal plus abandonment plus denial equals trouble-free hearts. I mean that makes no sense. On the surface, it seems like a recipe for denial or maybe Jesus was just being sarcastic. Well, I want to examine what Jesus meant when he spoke about not letting our hearts

be troubled. I mean, what did it mean to his disciples, what did it mean to him, and what does it mean to us?

Now his disciples were finishing up these three intense years of discipleship that they had with Jesus, and they're at this point where Peter is insisting that he's going to lay down his life for the master. Well, that turned out not to be true. Peter's heart ran into a whole bunch of trouble as he sat around that fire warming himself that night and he got accused by one of the followers of Jesus repeatedly and he denied it repeatedly. In fact he allowed his troubled heart to overrule the love that he had for Jesus and he vehemently denied that he ever knew him. And the rest of the disciples didn't fare much better. I mean, one of their number, Judas, literally betrayed him for 30 pieces of silver. The rest did exactly what Jesus said they would when he said in *John 16:32*: "*Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone.*" See, if anyone's heart should have been deeply, deeply troubled, it should have been Jesus's. He was the only one who had the burden of knowing every single step that the future was going to take. Jesus had spent three years teaching and nurturing and protecting these men as their good shepherd, and he even told them directly in *John 10:11*, he said: "*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*" And through all the triumphs,

through all the miracles, through all the raising of the dead and the feeding of the crowd, all of that Jesus knew that the day was coming. In fact Zechariah had prophesied about it centuries before. In *Zechariah 13:7* it says this: "*Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,*" declares the *LORD of hosts*. "*Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones.*" Jesus no doubt knew that sword was about to awaken. He knew that the shepherd was about to be stricken. And the present looked bleak, the future even bleaker for Jesus and the disciples and yet Jesus insists, "*Let not your hearts be troubled.*" I mean, if things were looking bleak for the disciples, they were looking altogether devastating for the one who was leading them.

So we wonder how is it that Jesus could be almost lighthearted in the face of what he knew was coming? I mean, he's about to be arrested, the disciples are about to be scattered, he's going to be left completely alone to take on the sin of the world. That's the burden that he carried. That's what was going on inside his own head. And you know if you've ever had to anticipate some kind of dreadful event in your future, you know what that does to you, how it just drags you down. Maybe it's a court date, maybe it's an impending break-up of a relationship, maybe it's a termination of employment that you know is coming, maybe it's some kind of

dreadful appointment with a doctor. We all know that when we have something fearful and dreadful ahead of us in our lives how much it wears on us every single day. There's something to be said for something to be happening suddenly as opposed to events that are planned, events that unfold so slowly and so inevitably that we can count each approaching day with an ever growing sense of impending doom. In light of that, how is it that Jesus could then say to his disciples, "*Let not your hearts be troubled*"? How could he say that as much to himself and how is it that he's going to say that to us?

Well, let's first look at the disciples. Here's what Jesus said to them and here's why he said it. Again, this is *John 14*, he says: "*Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.*" Well, Jesus gave them three reasons why their hearts should not be troubled. The first was faith in God which the disciples to a degree already had. The second was faith in himself, and after three years of seeing what Jesus did, seeing him feed the hungry, seeing him heal the sick, raise the dead, they had ample reason to believe in him as well. But the third reason, the third reason that he Jesus gave to them to not be troubled in heart was because Jesus was making plans for them. This is what it says in verse 2, he says: "*In my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if*

I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." See what Jesus was doing was he was looking right through an extraordinarily difficult present to an extremely glorious future. I mean, the reason why Jesus told him about his father's house is because he knew that focusing in on what was awaiting them in the future was the key to them enduring their present. It was a future hope that enabled Jesus to insist to the disciples "*Let not your hearts be troubled.*" And you know, the same applied to Jesus himself. I mean there's no question that Jesus was looking at the single most dreadful event that any human being is ever going to face in the history of mankind. You know, God who had become a man had led his life perfectly and now because of that very perfection, well, he was worthy to offer up that life as a sacrifice, as a ransom payment for his sheep. He was the good shepherd. And he was there to lay down his life for his sheep. But in order to do that, he would have to come before his father bearing every single one of our sins. And one of the most brutal aspects of him bearing that sin was the complete and utter abandonment by everything there was in heaven above and earth below. You know, it is more than symbolic that Jesus was hung on a cross. I mean, he was hung in such a way that he was suspended above the earth which had rejected him and below a heaven which had no choice to reject him as well, suspended right in the middle. He had to appear before his father

completely, totally and utterly alone, thrust into the outer darkness of complete and total abandonment.

Now there was a small statement of hope that Jesus gave when he started reflecting on the fact that the sheep would abandon him. He said this in *John 16:32*, he said: "*Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.*" Well, there's a comfort in that but Jesus knew that that comfort was only temporary and that the father at the time of the son's greatest need would have no choice but to abandon him altogether for the contamination of sin that he had become. And Jesus wasn't just nobly shouldering our burden of sin while still maintaining his status as God's perfect son. See, while on the cross that status was gone and in its place was Jesus having now become the living embodiment of everything vile, filthy, and foul. That's why Paul says in *2 Corinthians 5:21*: *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

So how in the world could God even begin to utter a statement such as "*Let not your hearts be troubled*" in the light of the horror that he was facing? Well, let me repeat myself. Jesus was looking right through an extraordinarily difficult present to an

extraordinarily glorious future. *Hebrews 12:2* says this, it says: *Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* So we have Jesus here seeing the joy set before him is making the cross, with all of its shame, with everything that he despised, as worth enduring. I mean what is so extraordinary about that statement is what the source of Jesus's joy was. You were the source of his joy. I am the source of his joy. It was you and it was me, it was you and me on our way to eternal separation from God and rescued by the good shepherd laying down that life for his sheep. Jesus was able to endure the agony of the cross and the shame of the cross because he was able to see right through the present to the future. And the present that was laid before him was absolutely terrifying. But make no mistake about it, Jesus was absolutely fearless. The prophet Isaiah has stated what our status was and he stated it clearly many, many years before. This is what Isaiah said in *Isaiah 53:6*, he said: *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned -- every one -- to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* Jesus would bear that iniquity alone on the cross and three days later he would rise from the dead having made an acceptable sacrifice that paid in full the price of our sins.

As the elders begin distributing the bread, one of the things I would like us to consider this morning is how Jesus was able to look to the future in order to sustain himself in the present. I mean, his future hope was the joy that was set before him. That joy happened to be the cross. And he's explaining to the disciples that part of their future hope was the hope he was going to when he was going to this place to prepare for them an eternal home.

As the bread is being distributed, consider also this warning that God gives about communion itself. This is from *1 Corinthians 11*, verse 28, it 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.* You know, communion is extremely serious business. I say this each time because it's an appropriate warning, and I say to enter into communion in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster, and if you're not totally confident, absolutely confident that you are a child of the king or if you first need to be reconciled with your brother before you bring your gifts before the altar, then don't participate, just pass the elements along. Nobody's going to give

you a hard time, nobody's going to think you weird or different or strange; they may well think you wise. But on the other hand, we also want to point out we can make the mistake of thinking that unless, unless I'm spotlessly perfect, I'm unworthy to receive communion. That, too, is a mistake. You see, being a child of the King doesn't mean that we don't sin and that we never fail. It means we recognize that the salvation that we have is a gift and it's from gift of God, it's a gift that no one, anywhere, anyhow at any time is ever capable of earning. I repeat each month this wonderful quote from Dane Ortlund. He says this: "In the kingdom of God the one thing that qualifies you is knowing you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifying you is thinking that you do." This also means that when we do fail, we are aware that we have sinned. Why? Because God the Holy Spirit lives inside us. We have that blessing. The Spirit of God lives inside us convicting us and we grieve as children who know that we have a father who longs to forgive us and to cleanse us, a father who says in *John 1:19*: "*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 were perfect, flawless, without sin. It means that when we do sin we realize, we understand, we know we have an advocate with the father, someone who is speaking in heaven on our behalf. *1 John 2:1*: *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 have Jesus's righteousness, not ours, Jesus's, because we have Jesus's righteousness, we are now free to eat at his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that he's purchased for you with his blood. I mean, he lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserve to die so that we could be made worthy of heaven. Take some time right now and ask yourself with everything that's going on in my life right now, how do I respond to Jesus's command: "Let not your hearts be troubled."

1 Corinthians 11, verse 23 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." So take and eat.

We have been looking at this curious statement that Jesus made to his disciples in light of the circumstances that he and they find themselves in. Jesus's ministry with the disciples is coming to an end, he's about to leave them, one of their numbers is a betrayer, another one's going to publicly deny him and yet Jesus says to them: *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe*

also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." You know, we wonder where Jesus finds the hope and the strength to even think that let alone speak it like he did. And we find that the hope that he gives them is basically the same future hope that Jesus gives himself. I mean *Hebrews 12:2* says: *Jesus, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross.* And the disciples for the joy set before them by a place prepared in heaven by Jesus himself should therefore not let their hearts be troubled.

So the question is for us today, what about us? How do we go about the business of not letting our hearts be troubled? Well, we do that by doing exactly what Jesus did, by following what he did and what he did with the disciples, knowing that he fully intends to do that with us as well. Listen again to what Jesus is saying here. He says: *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me."* Now these same points that Jesus made to his disciples, he's making to us. Why should our hearts not trouble us? Well, first because we have God. We have God the Father and Jesus says believe in God. We have that. I mean, have you ever wondered what am I doing here this morning? What am I doing in this place? I mean, there's a thousand other places that you could

be. Why am I here? I mean, why do the things of God, the things of God's kingdom hold any interest to you at all? It's not by chance. It's not by somebody else's cleverness, it's not by your or my deeper sense of our own spirituality as well. It's by none of us that God chooses to have his word find a home in our hearts.

Listen to what God says about who chose whom. He says this in *1 Corinthians 1*, he says: *For consider your calling, brothers: Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him -- him you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "let one who boasts, boast in the Lord."* I don't know that we realize or recognize or understand that we have the greatest gift a human being can have. There is no gift greater than that. We have the living God as our father as well. I mean, it is his spirit who pursued us to make the loveliness of Christ lovely to us. I mean verse 30 says: *Because of him you are in Christ Jesus.*

Secondly, we have God the Son. *"Believe in God, believe also in me."* So why should our hearts be troubled when we have living within our hearts the living son of God? I mean in the Old Testament God lived in one particular place, he lived in a temple in Jerusalem. Well today God lives not in a building made of brick and mortar, but he lives inside human beings, humans that he created for himself. I mean, we have a verse that we repeat so often it's become almost a cliché. It's a verse that speaks directly to our bodies as being these temples that God is now living inside. It's *1 Corinthians 6:19*, it says: *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?* Well, Peter enlarges on that fact. See, Peter sees each of us now, we are living stones and there's a new temple, it's a spiritual temple built up but it's not made of brick and mortar, it's made of human beings. Peter addresses this very notion when speaking to the troubled hearts of the persecuted church. This is what he says in *1 Peter 2*, he says: *As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house.* What he's saying is the temple of God today in the 21st century is made up -- of all things is made up of homo sapiens. Christ lives in us. We make up that new temple. *Romans 8* says: *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the*

Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So Christ is telling his disciples that their hearts shouldn't be troubled because God the Father and God the Son are their most precious possessions.

Well, not only do we have the living God himself dwelling within us, we also have all that the Father and all that the Son are preparing for us. Jesus says: *"In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."* Well, Jesus is referring to all of the preparations that are taking place in heaven, being -- this place being prepared for us and he tells us to fix our eyes not on this earth and all of its troubles that we're going to have here, but on him, on who he is and what he has provided for us and what he has done in the world, how he has conquered the world. He says in *John 16:32*: *"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* So how did Jesus overcome the world? How did he do it? Well, he did it by focusing on his Father. He did it by

focusing on the future glories of his Father and his Father's kingdom. You know when Jesus left this earth, guess what? He deputized us to do the very same thing. *Matthew 28* says: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commended you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." See, the focus that will always, always get us through any of this world's troubles is Christ and his kingdom. I mean, we remember this great cloud of witnesses that went ahead before us. We remember Paul who was beaten and left for dead, flogged, starved, abandoned, and stoned, he probably had more right than any to say that this world is troubling to any and all hearts, but he said almost the exact opposite. In *2 Corinthians 4:17* he said: *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.* Well, you know, he couldn't possibly have seen this misery of this life as light and momentary, unless he had something else that by comparison would make this world's struggles seem trivial, even temporary, and that's precisely what he saw. And Paul says to the extent that your focus is split screen, you have one eye on this world with all of its difficulties and all of its struggles and one eye on the kingdom and all of its future glories, then you will always see this world as Christ saw it, as temporary and powerless to steal your joy. Peter was another one

of this great cloud of witnesses. And Peter referred to it this way as well in 1 Peter 4:12, he said: *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.* And so we have this enormous cloud of witnesses, all of these people, we have Jesus, we have Peter, we have Paul, all the other witnesses who certainly could never be accused of living some kind of Pollyanna type life and having a Pollyanna type view of the world and all its sufferings. These are folks who knew exactly what suffering was all about because they were thrust right into the middle of it for much of their lives. Yet something gave them a power, a power strong enough to rise far enough above it so that their hearts were not troubled. That power comes from focusing on Christ. Hebrews 12 speaks of this great cloud of witnesses who all address their own troubled hearts by focusing on Christ and his kingdom rather than on their own personal struggles, even though Jesus acknowledged that these struggles are real and we're all going to have them, he said: *"In this world you will have tribulation."* And so Peter acknowledged them and Paul acknowledges them and all of the saints acknowledge them. There's nobody that didn't. In fact only a fool would pretend that we live a carefree struggle-less life. We all have struggles but it's what we do with them that makes all the

difference in the world.

Listen to the full context of what Hebrews is telling us. This is *Hebrews 12:1-2*, it says: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us -- looking where? To Jesus -- looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* See, the great cloud of witnesses that all of the saints that went before us got through it because they looked to Jesus, and it's they who are now cheering us on.

I came across a quote, and it was on Facebook; it was by Andy Stanley. Now I got some serious issues with Andy Stanley but this quote was I think incredibly apropos because it was about this particular scripture. So much so that I brought it in. It's only about a minute but I want you to understand what he is saying in his sermon about *Hebrews 12:1-2*, do you have that? You get the gist. Well, you can read it. It loses some of its oomph by not having the volume because it's -- what he is saying is completely apropos for us right here today. You get the gist. If you just leave it up there, let me just repeat what it says. He co-opts

that scripture and he says therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us hide, whine, complain, hoard our resources just in case, put our bibles in a drawer -- what's next?

(Video playing)

Okay. Chew on that for a little bit as the elders come and start distributing the cup. As they're distributing the cup, I would just like us to take this time to consider what it is that troubles our hearts. You know, Andy Stanley is looking at what troubled the great cloud of witnesses, and he sees a lot more reason that they had to be troubled than we do. These were people who gave up everything and suffered enormously for a church that they did not even know would survive to the first century. Fred, I think my mic's off. Like I said, these were people who gave up everything and suffered enormously for a church they didn't even know would survive and this is what *Hebrews 11:35* has to say. It says: *Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated -- of whom the world was not worthy, wandering about in deserts and mountains and*

in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised.

You get that? These are folks that had incredibly awful things happen to them and it says they did not receive what was promised. We, too, have not received what was promised, I mean, the church is not reigning triumphant over the entire earth. But here's what we have received in the last 2100 years. We've seen the church grow and we've seen the church grow from a tiny scared little group of disciples to billions and billions of people now covering the entire face of the earth. We have the advantage of 21 centuries of proof that the gates of hell are not going to prevail against the church. So why are our hearts troubled? You know, the church in Jesus's day triumphed over their troubled hearts even though they did not have the advantages that we have today. They didn't have Internet, they didn't have TV, they have didn't have thousands of years of history to prove that the Holy Spirit was going to sustain them. They weren't even certain that they were going to survive the next year. Our hearts are troubled over a culture that is deteriorating and over a church that seems to have lost its way. What troubled their hearts was so far beyond that that, as he says, it's embarrassing to compare the two. You see, it's so easy to let politics and culture and entertainment put us in a place where we just want to crawl into a foxhole and hide. And we hear Christ

saying *"Let not your hearts be troubled"* and we say, well, maybe he's just a little bit out of touch. Maybe he just doesn't understand what we are going through here in America. Maybe he has no idea what kind of a mess we're in. So it's so appropriate for us to be troubled in our hearts. Think about that. Really? I mean, I think all we really need here is a sense of history, a sense of knowing where we came from, what that great cloud of witnesses went through compared to what we are going through right now. It is so easy to get caught up in our own stuff yet the answer according to Jesus and Peter and Paul is to take our eyes off our stuff and put them firmly on Jesus and the future that he has for us.

One of the things that Andy Stanley said in that sermon and he pointed out again and again we're on the other side of history. The great cloud of witnesses that have gone before us, they didn't have Christian radio, they didn't have Christian TV or universities or hospitals or the Billy Graham Association or Voice of the Martyrs or IJM or any of those things. They didn't even have a New Testament. Hadn't even been written yet. We have the testimony of over 2,000 years of the church's advance. So Jesus says, *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go and prepare a place for you? And if I go and*

prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." Think on that for a moment.

1 Corinthians the 11th chapter 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 our hands, heart, and feet part. And I want to do an illustration for this. Steve, would you help me with this? Just want to stretch that out? First I want to tell you this is stolen 100 percent from Francis Chan so you know. I saw this and I was so impressed by what he was doing that I wanted to use it to illustrate. Thanks. You can just put that down right there. And what he was saying is you see this string that I have right here? And picture this string and it goes down to the end of the -- of the room right there but picture it going outside the door, down snaking through Pike County, going across the Ohio Valley to the Midwest to California across the Pacific to the Far East, stretching back and coming around a couple more times and then maybe shooting off to Alpha Centauri, and other parts of the universe including the billions of stars that are there, this line is your eternity. This is every single bit of your existence.

Okay. Now bearing that in mind, this is your life. This is your birth, this is your death, this is grammar school, this is high school, this is college, this is retirement right here. Okay? Just want you to bear that in mind. I want you to bear that in mind because what Jesus was telling the disciples is that you need to look at this in order to make this work. You see, our lives are going to be, as Francis Chan said, filled with either two things, regret or reward. And what this is going to be like is determined by how this goes. And how this is understood is going to be determined by what credence we put in this. You see, Jesus and God the Father knew this and know this, they see this all the time. So when Jesus says to us, "*Let not your hearts be troubled,*" he's looking at this. We're looking at this. This is what we see as incredibly important. What am I going to do, how am I going to get enough money for college? How am I going to get enough money for retirement? That's not what this is all about. What God is saying to us and why Jesus says, "*Let not your hearts be troubled*" is because all of this is what's in store for us, and this is what is absolutely critical. The way we live this life. That's why James said, you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Paul says: *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.* Well, Paul lived an incredibly miserable life, a really hard life. And yet he says

that it's light and momentary and one of the reasons why he says it's light and momentary -- Steve, you can pick up that -- where's that blue section right there? See that blue section right there? That's the comparison with how much time Paul has spent on earth compared to so far that's how much time he's spent in heaven. Do you see why he says this is light and momentary? I mean, just right there, that's how long he's been in heaven since he's been created. So everything relatively speaking is going to become light and momentary for us depending on how we treat this. This is what is absolutely critical. How do you see this?

One of the roles that I see us taking and one of the things that I think is so critical for us, we've been looking and trying to figure out how do we -- how do we go forward? What is the best way for us to go forward? And part of that is by looking backwards, looking at our past, seeing how did we get where we got? And I can tell you how we got where we got. It's very simple. I'll give you a bunch of names and I'm going to read these names out and I'll tell you, these are the people who are responsible for us getting where we got. Tell me if you see something strange about this list: Bertha Moore, Helen Sorenson, Jean Warner, Eleanor Machete, Donna Tetter, Rosie Zaorski and Sylvia Butski. Anybody know anything strange about that? Everybody on this list got double X chromosomes. Isn't that strange? There's not a guy among them.

It was women. It was women who built this church and it was women who sustained this church. And it was women's prayer that did it. One of the things that we are trying to figure out how best to encourage is prayer because we believe that this church is never going to go forward until it gets prayer right. And one of the frightening things to us is the reason why we are celebrating our 25th year this year, and one of the reasons why we got here was because there were these women who saw the incredible importance of prayer. Bertha Moore -- you know, when we started this church, Bertha Moore -- we left from a church that was established, it was all squared away, you could have had a very nice, comfortable life. Bertha Moore was in her mid 90's when she said, I'm going with you guys, and I feel God is calling me to be with you guys so that I can be a prayer warrior for you. And these women prayed over and over and over for every single member in the church. They are why this church is here. And what makes us so concerned as elders is they're all gone. You know where they are right now? These are the great cloud of witnesses. They're with them up there. And they're cheering us on and they're saying, come on, it's not nearly so bad as you think it is. I mean after all, you have not yet shed your blood. And so what he's -- what they're asking, what I'm asking for, all of us -- and I should also point out that there was somebody -- I was running this list by somebody and they said, "What about Leon?" Leon faithfully came to prayer every single

Wednesday. It was incredibly important to him. But the point of fact at this point right now is we don't have those prayer warriors, we don't have those people who say I'm going to be praying for this church. And I don't mean you have to be there, this is not about putting fannies in the pews. It doesn't mean that you have to be there, it means that you have to have a heart that says this church will not go forward until we have people who are absolutely committed to prayer for it like we had at the beginning. So what we're asking for this is the hands, heart, and feet part today. We're asking for people to cry out to God to give them a heart for prayer and a heart for prayer for this church. We have a role to fulfill in this culture that's collapsing. We're the only ones that have the hope. We're the only ones that have the light in the darkness that surrounds us, and it's so easy, like they say, it's so easy to get into our foxholes and just say, oh, everything is coming apart and then we just look backwards and we look at the church when it started and it had nothing. Nothing. Except Christ and the Holy Spirit. And that's all they needed. So I want to just pray this morning for all of us that we would come to the knowledge and the understanding and the commitment that prayer is first and foremost for everything. Let's pray.

Father God, we as a church want to come before you this communion Sunday, we want to confess, so often we are as Andy Stanley said,

it's embarrassing to compare what troubles our hearts compared to what troubled the hearts of the first church. Father, they understood, they had you, they had the Father, they had the Son, they had the promises of the Son that he was going forward to prepare a place for them. Father, I pray that you would give us the commitment, the understanding that we have the Father, we have the Son, we have the promises as well, all we need to do is connect to the source, connect to the Holy Spirit, continue that connection of prayer that enables God to say they get it, they have the power to go forward, they have the power to handle anything that comes their way exactly the same way that the first church did. And with that, Lord, I just have absolute confidence we will go forward, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.