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The Who, the What and the Therefore

1 John 3:1

Prayer: *Father, I just again, I thank you for the privilege we have, as I've said, of still being able to gather together freely and safely. I just thank you for your church. I just continue to thank you for the gift of your word, for the presence of your Holy Spirit. And once again, Lord, we acknowledge without your Holy Spirit this is a hopeless task. And so we pray that you would guide us, that you would accompany us as we look into your word and that you would make it of permanent value. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, the last time out we spoke, if you remember we spoke about truth, the idea as Oprah would have it that there is such a thing as "your truth" as opposed to "the truth" has become now established as settled truth when it certainly is not. And we discovered that John had much to say about ultimate truth. See, truth has a definition that almost no one would quibble with, and that definition is this: Truth is that which lines up with reality. And when you think about it, that's exactly what truth

has to do. What everyone is fighting about now is just what reality itself is. Jesus makes the claim that I and all believers hang everything on, that he in fact is the truth. He also makes the claim that the ruler of this world and this world system is a lie. And so once again we are back to this battle between the kingdoms and the goal here as to see which kingdom lines up on the side of reality. We claim the ultimate reality is Jesus Christ and what he has done for us and we see that reality with crystal clarity. The world which is synonymous with the kingdom of darkness is actually blinded and stumbling, completely unaware that it sees an entirely different picture. *2 Corinthians 4:4* says: *The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Jesus told us that we cannot serve two masters, that the differences between this world and the kingdom of darkness -- the difference between his world and the kingdom of darkness, those differences are so stark, so pervasive and so vast, there's no hope whatsoever of a middle ground. We are in a war. I mean the great fear today is that the United States and Russia is going to get drawn into a proxy war with great powers that are fighting each other through proxies in Ukraine, but that's exactly what's taking place right here, right now in the spiritual realm. The

kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light have been doing battle ever since the fall and the battleground is planet earth. Those who are thoroughly enmeshed in the kingdom of this world are so thoroughly blinded by the enemy that they don't merely disagree with the gospel, they can't even bear to hear it. Jesus made that clear when he argued with the unbelieving religious leaders about why they were constantly flummoxed by his brilliance. This is what Jesus said in *John 8:43*. He said: *Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.* How many times have you heard politicians speak and thought to yourself, I just can't stand to hear that guy talk? This is the feeling that a lot of the world has toward Jesus. I mean we spent a lot of time focusing on the threat to truth our modern culture is that we are literally surrounded by lies, deception and false teaching and how important it is to be constantly seeking that which is true as opposed to that which is trendy or popularly acceptable.

Now John is going to take us on a different tack. It's a tack that's going to lead us right into the next chapter, chapter three. The bad news is the deception that surrounds us, the good news is that God has given us his Holy Spirit of truth. *1 John 2:20* says: *But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.* See we now have the ability to perceive truth because his spirit of truth has come to live inside us. John says in

verses 26 through 29 of 1 John 2, he says: *I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.* What God is saying is it's the anointing of the Holy Spirit that's teaching us about everything. In other words understanding comes through spiritual and not intellectual channels. As Jesus put it in his conversation with Nicodemus, he said: *"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

Well fully, fully grasping that was actually life changing for me. I spent many, many years of my Christian life thinking that the more I refined my argument, the more people I would wind up leading to Christ. And I've learned the truth of that, I've also learned the error of that as well. I mean the truth of that is contained in Peter's call in 1 Peter 3. He says: *Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.* Well the error, the error's in thinking that the account itself is what's going to lead people into the kingdom. I mean all through the last thirty or so years I've seen my arguments grow more and more

refined and yet less and less effective at the same time only to realize that it is God alone and his Holy Spirit who will make his word make sense. Now that doesn't alleviate our responsibility to do our very best to answer that hope that's within us. But never, never make the mistake of thinking that understanding comes from any other source than a supernatural anointing of God. And that's just what John is telling us in *1 John 2:20-21*. He says: *But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.* You see, that Holy One's anointing, that's the ability to perceive truth even if you're surrounded by a sea lies. And when that happens it's because God has done a miraculous spiritual heart transplant and the Spirit of Christ himself has come in to us to take up residence within us. And Paul made that crystally clear when he said in *Romans 8:9*, he said: *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.*

So just what does the anointing from the Holy Spirit consist of? Well, I spoke a few weeks back of the dramatic way that God showed me his indwelling Holy Spirit, how the day that I got saved I went from cursing, using his name in vain in the afternoon to hearing somebody else do the exact same thing and finding myself being

filled with the horror at the ugliness of that very thing. Well that was the difference between the Holy Spirit being outside and the Holy Spirit being inside, entering into and sealing me that very day, giving me a sense of how awful it was to hear the name of the Lord Jesus spoken of that way. I mean in that very same day Christ came into me, his spirit of truth gave me a brand new perception of something I'd been blinded to that very same afternoon. For the first time ever I was no longer blinded by the god of this world. I was given the ability to actually see truth line up with reality.

And if we go back to our original definition of truth we hear John simply restating in practical terms what that definition is saying. In verse 21 he says: *I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.* What John is saying is it's not like you don't know what's true and what's not. It's because God's spirit of truth has given you the ability to know what lines up with reality and what doesn't. And the basic simple truth that defines our reality as human beings is that we exist to bring glory to God. The chief end of man truly is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Jesus told us in very simple terms, he said: *Let your light shine before men so that they may see your good works* and do what? Give glory to God. The apostle Peter put it this way in *1 Peter 2:9*. He

says: *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* So I said proclaiming Christ's excellencies should never be limited to a pastor preaching from a pulpit. I mean it should be something you should be bursting to share with your neighbor, your friend, your associate, anyone that God brings into your life. This is what gives meaning to our lives.

John sums it all up ending chapter 2 with this kind of summary statement. This is *1 John 2:26-29*, he says: *I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie -- just as it has taught you, abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.* And so ends chapter two.

Well we're going to find chapter three takes an entirely different tack. This is *1 John 3:1*. John says: *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of*

God! Now I hope that sounds familiar to you. I mean thanks to Fred we frequently sing this scripture. It should be familiar to all of us. Unfortunately sometimes our familiarity breeds not contempt but some kind of sloppiness when it comes to really perceiving what is being said here. You see that word "behold" is a unique form of imperative. It's a unique command from God that demands our complete and total attention. It needs to be written in red blazing letters as if God is saying, "Stop!" "Wait a minute!" "Consider for a moment what I'm communicating to you right now!" This morning that's just what we want to do. We want to consider the who of the Father, the what of the manner of love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God, and finally the therefore of the world's response.

Our scripture this morning is *1 John 3:1: Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.*

So first let's look at the who, at this love that the Father has. I think if we were truly honest with ourselves, we'd admit we really have a tough time ascribing love to the Father. I mean love appears to be something that we ascribe to the Son and the Son only. I mean most people think of the Father, they think of

holiness, they think of severity, perhaps even of punishment. We think of the Father and we think of Mount Sinai and Moses and the holy mountain and if you touch it, you're going to die. The term "Father" evokes distance, maybe fear, unapproachability. Some of that is by design. See much of God's purpose in the Old Testament was establishing the fact that he is holy, that he is other, not at all like we fellow humans. And we humans need to understand the difference between Creator and creature. Part of our fallen human nature is our tendency to see God as nothing more than amplified humanity, a superman, if you will, and God insists that even a superman is a grotesquely shrunken understanding of who he really is. I mean God's creative power alone puts him in a category that precludes any comparison whatsoever to anything else in the universe.

Consider these statements that God makes about who created all of the planets and the stars in our universe. This is *Psalm 33:6*. He says: *By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. Isaiah 45:12 says: I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host. Isaiah 40:25-26 says: To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by*

name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.

Just some facts. Now first of all, there are approximately 200 billion stars in our galaxy. That's the one that we call "the Milky Way." Okay. 200 billion. You think about, that's a lot of stars, one of which happens to be our sun. Now our sun, according to NASA, is just a fair to midly average type star, it's 864,000 miles in diameter which compares with 8,000 for earth itself. Like I said, there's about 200 billion of these stars just in our galaxy, The Milky Way. But then you ask, well, how many galaxies are there in the universe? Well, science thinks it has a way of counting. What they do is they take a section of the visible universe and they don't count the stars, they count the galaxies, each of which contain about a billion stars. So they count each galaxy in that little section of the universe that they can photograph and then they multiply the number of galaxies by the amount of photos it would take to fill up the whole universe and by that count science figures that there's approximately two thousand billion galaxies, each of which contains a billion stars. That's a number of stars about the size of our sun approaching ten to the twenty-fourth power. And again, that's just a wild guess but that's ten with twenty-four zeroes after it. I mean it's a number unpronounceable and unimaginable in scope and size. And the very

same God that we're talking about is the one who claims to have spoken all of it into existence by his power alone. I mean that speaks to God's omnipotence. There's also his omnipresence and his omniscience, he's all powerful, he's all present, he's all knowing, and all of these are just a part of what makes God so different from any other entity we could ever imagine.

And so when it comes to God's holiness, to his otherness, we see God asking a very reasonable question in *Isaiah 40*. He says: *To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.* How could anyone even begin to compare with a Creator such as that? And so what do we do? We react to God's otherness by trying to shrink him down to a manageable level, to something comprehensible to our thinking, and the result is a false picture of who God really is. I mean I still cringe at folks who think of God as "the big guy upstairs," "my co-pilot". God doesn't even rate being a pilot, he's stuck in second in command, he's the co-pilot as you pilot your way through life?

I mean when we begin to ponder the enormity of just who God is, we also wonder how could someone of that magnitude possibly care about anything as puny as us? I mean do you and I worry over, fret over and pour out our lives for insects and plankton? Listen to what David says. David says: *When I look at your heavens, the work of*

your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

Now David, David's struggle is our struggle as well, I mean, how could a God of such enormity possibly care for creatures such as us? But as we look to our scripture this morning we find out it actually gets worse, or I should say better when we consider next the what of not just the love but the manner of love the Father has given to us. Again our scripture is: *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!* I think every one of us deep down, we all identify in some ways with the prodigal son. You know, it took him the loss of his wealth and literally the company of pigs to make him realize how unworthy he was and beg for a place alongside his father's servants. And we who have the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we also have the presence of God, understand he's living inside us, and as he's living inside us he's convicting us of sin, so we don't have to guess whether or not we're unworthy servants. We don't have the luxury of relativizing our wickedness like the world does because we have God's Spirit inside us. Listen to what Jesus told his disciples in *John 16*. He said: *Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go*

away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

Jesus is telling us the spirit of truth convicts us and the rest of the world reacts to that conviction with repentance or not. And if they reject God's truth, they sink deeper and deeper in the muck and eventually they lose the ability to see how wicked they have become. I mean we've seen that vividly portrayed in 2 Kings chapter 6. We have an incident that's almost unbelievable in its awfulness. The king of Israel's city is under siege and he comes across a woman who is demanding justice. And when he asks her what the plight was, he discovers that her circumstance has stripped her of any pretense whatsoever of morality. It's erased all traces of guilt or conscience that would have sought to slow down her descent into madness. 2 Kings 6, it says: *Then the king said to her, "What is troubling you?" And she answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' So we boiled my son, and ate him. And I said to her on the next day, 'Give your son, that we may eat him'; but she has hidden her son."* Folks, this is what a full blown moral free fall actually looks like. You see, her idea of wickedness is no longer cannibalistic murder, it's now reduced to reneging on a deal. The siege of her city and the starvation it had produced had erased all

traces of civilization and moral goodness that she thought she once possessed. Truth for her was now just a matter of survival. And without the Spirit of Truth, she had nothing to stop her descent into depravity.

Now here in the United States we wouldn't dare practice the cannibalistic murder of children because we're sophisticated, we're civilized. We just tear them into pieces while they're still in the womb and then we sell their body parts to pharmaceutical companies. And we don't have the excuse of starvation or siege. Our choices are made for convenience and greed. This is what happens when folks refuse the Spirit of Truth. John says: *I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie -- just as it has taught you, abide in him.*

You see, without the Spirit of Truth there is literally no bottom to the barrel. We've seen it over and over again. Every time we thought we've arrived there, new bottoms are suddenly discovered. I mean the folks who actually sold those body parts, they have no pangs of conscience, and they've actually suffered no serious criminal penalties as well. In fact, the person who went

undercover and revealed these crimes is the one that is now facing serious jail time. And I might add it was all under the auspices of the then attorney general of California, Kamala Harris.

Well the good news and the bad news for those of us that who've received the anointing of the Holy Spirit is that we know to a far greater extent the wickedness that all of us are capable of. We all know the wickedness that we've been part of. We also know a perfectly holy flawless God who sees all and knows all, including our own personal wickedness and yet deep down we know something else, something critical, and that is that God doesn't look at us with disgust or dismay. He's not averting his eyes while he allows us to slither or slink into his kingdom hoping that our fallenness or our sinfulness isn't put under the spotlight. Instead God says: *Behold. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!* Just like with the prodigal we find the Father not just willing to tolerate our presence but he's celebrating it. He's insisting that we're not just unworthy servants, we're sons, sons of God, brothers of Christ, heirs to his kingdom. Well some think that's no great stretch for God. What's the big deal? It cost him next to nothing, I mean, God's all powerful, he can do whatever he wants. If he wants us to be children of God, we are children of God, so some folks would have us believe. But it's not nearly that simple.

As I've mentioned many times before, there are those who are now resolutely against the idea of penal substitution, that is that Jesus Christ substituted himself and bore our penalty on the cross. These folks feel that it represents God as being vengeful, demanding a blood sacrifice before he forgives. And what this position ignores is what it cost a holy God to maintain his absolute perfection to satisfy the justice of his holiness and still be able to welcome us as sons and daughters. It cost him his Son. Anyone who's ever had a child suffering an illness knows the agony of seeing them in pain. You know, most parents would much rather suffer themselves than to have their child suffer, but that's not how this world works. We don't have the power to change that. But God did. For an all powerful, omniscient God who had the power and the ability to change any circumstance that he wanted, to view his son being slaughtered by the very people that he came to serve is something that goes beyond our comprehension as well. I mean we so often focus on the Son when we talk about the cross, and rightly so, but understand that God the Father expressed the deepest part of himself to us through his Son. All that God wanted to communicate to us about his love, his compassion, his long suffering and his patience, he communicated to us through his Son.

I mean we've already spoken about God's otherness, his holiness,

his difference from us, how it made it difficult if not impossible for God to communicate with us. I mean when Moses asked God to fully reveal himself, God said no. God refused, telling Moses that a full revelation of who he was would cause him instant death, because according to *Exodus 33*: *"Man shall not see me and live."* So God spoke to us but he spoke to us through creation. He spoke to us through his prophets. He spoke but he spoke most clearly and most plainly to us through his Son. *Hebrews 1:1* says: *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.* I mean you think about that. God didn't speak French, he didn't speak Japanese, he didn't speak English, he spoke Jesus. The birth of the Lord Jesus Christ was literally God speaking incarnationally into flesh. We rightfully spend much of our time giving honor to the Son when we celebrate communion, but make no mistake about it, the agony of the Father and his sacrifice at the cross was just as real.

In fact Jesus tells a story towards the end of his life about how the cross was the culmination of the insults and the abuse that the Father constantly received for his overtures of love to Israel. This is how Jesus put it in *Matthew 21*. He says this, he says: *"Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a*

vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?"

Jesus is telling the religious leaders that God sent prophets to warn the nation and they beat and stoned them. And so he sent more prophets and they beat and stoned them as well. And finally he said, "I'll send my son. Surely they will respect my son." And they slaughtered him. Except this wasn't a story, this wasn't a parable, this was truth, absolute reality not yet unfolded in time, told by the one who would endure it while his Father, the landowner, forced by his love for his future sons and daughters, watched silently as his beloved son is being butchered. The holy one who made the stars has to watch in silence listening as the

vinedressers laugh as they beat, slap and spit on his son. He watches in silence as his son endures a sham trial that ends with him being flogged near death, then being put on display for the very people he had been sent to to protect. And they demand not only that he be crucified but that his blood be on his son and on their children. No wonder God says, wait. No wonder God says, stop. No wonder God says, *behold what manner of love the Father has given us* because you cannot define that love. Because like the heavens he created, they go so far beyond our human capacity to even grasp it that all God can do is display it, to put it out there for all to say and then to simply say, "*behold.*"

That's the good news. Now it's followed by some bad news. It says: *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know him.* So we have the who, that's the Father and the great love that he has for his children. We have the what, that's the incredible privilege that he's purchased for us through the blood of his Son and that is that we have the right to be called his children. And now we have the therefore, and that's the price we pay for being one of those children. *Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know him.*

Now John isn't suggesting here that the world is ignorant of born again believers. It certainly knows we exist. But if you understand this world as essentially the battlefield on which a proxy war between kingdoms are being fought, then it makes perfect sense that this world would view anyone sold out to Christ as a threat and therefore as an enemy.

I just want to you consider one of my all-time favorite Christians, that's a man by the name of Tim Tebow. You all know Tim Tebow. He's a now retired professional football player. Well this past fall he tried to make yet another professional football team before he was cut before the season even started. You might say Tim had a less than lustrous athletic career after starting out winning the Heisman Trophy in college. And by worldly standards you might say he failed at football in the NFL, then he failed at baseball in major league baseball, but one thing you knew is that he gave it his very best shot. And all throughout his career, he was known as a vocal lover of Jesus, someone who would quickly drop to a knee and give thanks for a great play or a touchdown. We also know he had an absolutely squeaky clean life-style and he never hesitated to point out though that he saw himself as a sinner saved by grace.

And what is astounding is he is even more famous for being hated than he is for his accomplishments both on and off the field. You

know, when folks first learned that he was getting yet another try-out for a team this fall, they were outraged that he would be even given a chance. And during his athletic career there was almost a palpable level of vitriol, anger and bitterness towards Tebow that was so out of proportion that even non-believers took notice of it. One columnist said if you type in "hate Tim Tebow" into Google you will instantly get over three million responses. Another one asked what is it that Tebow has done to have a website called "hatetimtebow.com" dedicated to expressing how detested he was?

In a recent column -- this was just a few weeks ago -- a recent column by James Merilatt in the website "The Fan" summed it up nicely. The column was entitled: *"Once Again Tebow Haters Can't Seem to Figure Out What is Wildly Obvious."* He said -- quote -- "The Tebow phenomenon isn't hard to understand. If people would take a moment to try to see why people find the guy so interesting, rather just looking down their noses at those who support the guy. Let's start with the elephant in the room. Yes, there are a lot of people who like Tebow because of the quarterback's beliefs. Why is that a bad thing? He's a Christian and he's not afraid to share that fact. It's okay for other Christians, people who shares his beliefs, to gravitate toward him. Everyone is pulled toward people who share their worldview. Whether it's politics, religion, sports

allegiance, favorite restaurant or whatever. Birds of a feather flock together. Why is that a bad thing? This criticism of Tebow and his supporters makes zero sense."

Actually I have to disagree. I think it makes perfect sense if you understand what John is trying to tell us. He's saying that the world doesn't know us as children of God because it never knew him, and it resents anybody who does.

Ray Comfort pointed out something about Tim Tebow that I hadn't realized. He was curious why there's other athletes who identify as Christians who don't get the same harsh treatment that Tebow does. He pointed out that NBA superstar Stephen Curry, he talks about Jesus all the time and he quotes scripture all the time. He has Bible quotes all over his sneakers. And everybody still loves Stephen Curry. And the difference, he said, while again, not knocking Stephen Curry, God bless him for the courage to say what he says, but the difference is that Tebow has been very up front about the fact that Christ came to save sinners of which he numbered himself. That is Tim Tebow's not just about sharing Christ, he's about sharing the gospel of Christ, that we are all of us doomed from birth to an eternity separated from God because all of us have been born in sin and that Jesus is God in the flesh, come to rescue and ransom his sheep at the price of his own blood

shed on a cross. You see, Jesus as savior is a whole different story from Jesus as my friend, my mentor, my homeboy, because it gets right what Jesus came for and what he empowered us to share. And it's also exactly what Jesus warned us about in the scripture I quote often. This is *John 15*. Jesus says: *"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."* See, God's placed us in a world that's been blinded to the truth with the task of glorifying him. This is a world that loves its own, but it hates those who refuse to dance to its tune. It's a world that Jesus himself said in *John 8*: *"Cannot bear to hear my word."* Tim Tebow is exceptional but only in one sense, he represents you and me and anyone else who dares to open his mouth about his status as a son or daughter of God. He dares to be open-mouthed about saying, "I am a sinner saved by grace." Do likewise and I guarantee you, you too are going to pay a price. And the question we need to ask ourselves is am I willing to pay that price?

As Paul said to Timothy in *2 Timothy 3*: *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* There's an old cliché that says if you were ever arrested for being a Christian, would there ever be enough evidence to convict you?

Well, part of the reason why that's a cliché is because it's true. I mean there's a difference between shoving the gospel down someone's throat, something Tim Tebow never did, and always being prepared to give an account not for Jesus as homeboy, but for Jesus as Savior who died for our sins. That's what Tim Tebow is known for and that's why the world hates Tim Tebow. And that's why we love him and want to emulate his passion and courage. That's the hope that's within you and me and anyone else who can identify with a truth that is literally too great to express in words. All God can do is say: *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!* Let's pray.

Father, I just thank you for who you are, I thank you for -- I confess, Lord, that it's easy to think of God the Father as the harsh one, the mean one, the Old Testament's got the mean God, the New Testament has the nice God. Lord, what a disservice that does to you. I just think of the agony that you went through watching your Son being pummeled, tortured and executed and being willing to withhold your hand of judgment, knowing that this was the price that had to be paid. I thank you and praise you for your love for us. I thank you for the manner of love you have bestowed on us and for the privilege we have of being your children. And I praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.