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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**March 6, 2016**

**"Do You Still Not Know Me?"**

**John 14:1-9**

**Prayer:** *Father God, I do again thank you and praise you for the gift that you have given us of your Son. I thank you for the opportunity that we have once a month to remember specifically what you've done for us on the cross. This is that day, and so Lord, we pray for an extra measure of grace, we pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, that you would guide us into all truth and that you would help us to honor and glorify you. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, again, this is the first Sunday of the month and again as I say each first Sunday, this is the time when we remember Jesus Christ and his cross, and we start out by examining *Matthew 26:26* which describes Jesus on the night before he died meeting with his disciples there for the last time to celebrate a Passover supper. 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."*

Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and of his blood and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and to drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. He then asked them to remember this sacrifice on a regular basis, and this is what we call the Lord's table and we celebrate it once a month and we do that by meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, by examining ourselves, by asking God's Holy Spirit to point out areas in our lives where he's convicting 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."*

Now we've been following the life of Jesus and we're at the 14th chapter of the gospel of John and we've been looking at this six-word statement that Jesus said to his disciples at the very start of the chapter. He said this: *"Let not your hearts be troubled."* And we wonder why in the world would Jesus say that

considering that in the chapter before he had just told his disciples that one of them would betray him, that he was leaving them and that their leader Peter would deny him three times. And we saw that the answer that Jesus gave for not letting their hearts be troubled was three-fold. Jesus said this in *John 14:1-3*, he said: *"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."* So Jesus says believe in the Father, believe in me and believe in the preparations that I am making for a future for you and your hearts will not be troubled. And as I pointed out last time what was 2,000 years in the disciples' future as Jesus is speaking to them is now 2,000 years in our past. It's a past which has proven out Jesus's promise to care for and prepare a place for his church both in the kingdom to come and in the world that we have to live in. I mean, we've seen over the last 2,000 years that no matter what the world has thrown at the church, well, that the gates of hell have not prevailed against it. In fact the very things that have been sent to destroy the church have only served to make it stronger. The people that Jesus were speaking to that night, that little group has grown to a number literally in the billions that now occupies every single part of the globe. You've heard that phrase

"That which doesn't kill me makes me stronger." Well, that applies perfectly to the church with one glaring exception, and that is that even death cannot stop the church. I mean, the church spread through this unlikely means of persecution only because God miraculously enlightened and empowered his people. And as intense as this persecution at the start was, God's presence and power was even more so because everywhere the persecuted church went, it brought with them the power of God's Holy Spirit. And we're going to see this morning that that power was desperately needed because the disciples, spiritually speaking, they had next to none. I mean, even though they lived with Jesus for three years, they gave ample evidence that what Jesus taught them and demonstrated to them essentially went in one ear and out the other until God's Holy Spirit in-dwelt and empowered them and caused them to remember those things that they were once taught.

You know, Jesus knew, he knew that human beings don't have a healthy set of spiritual eyes and ears, and so he promised to send them his Spirit after he had gone. He said this in *John 14:16*, he said: *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you."* So Jesus

is here encouraging the disciples by telling them that they're going to receive a spiritual power that the world cannot receive, and he says they're going to get this power from the same source that we get it from and that's from the indwelling Holy Spirit. He tells them that when he leaves he's going to give them another helper and the helper's going to be with them forever. He also says the helper's going to live inside them. He says: *"You know him for he dwells with you and will be in you."*

So I look at the disciples that we're going to look at this passage that we're going to see this morning and I'm greatly encouraged because until, until that time when they were indwelt and taught by the Holy Spirit, they were absolutely clueless. No doubt they would have forgotten almost all of what Jesus had taught them if it wasn't for the fact that God's promised Holy Spirit was sent there to help them remember. Again, Jesus put it very clearly, he said in verse 26: *"The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."*

Now, that teaching and remembering ministry of the Holy Spirit was absolutely crucial because as we're going to see in our passage this morning, the disciples, spiritually speaking, were almost completely deaf, dumb and blind. And as they were, we are. You

see, the fall of Adam has blinded every one of our spiritual eyes. It has given us spiritual ears that cannot hear and a spiritual heart that wants nothing whatsoever to do with Christ. That's why God describes the natural state of our being this way in 1 *Corinthians 2:14*. God says: *The unbeliever does not welcome what comes from God's Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually.* The good news, the wonderful news for those who know Christ as Lord and Savior is that when we accept by faith the price that Jesus paid for us on the cross, we become something completely different, we become born again new creatures. These new creatures have eyes that now see, they have ears that now begin to hear. And Jesus puts it this way in *John 10:27*, he says: *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand."* Notice what Jesus is saying here. Some people may find this insulting. I find this incredibly liberating, what Jesus is saying here. He says that you and I were given as gifts from the Father to the Son. Any time you think you came to faith because of your superior spiritual insight, scratch that thought and realize that you came to Christ because the Father, for reasons known only to him, deemed you as a suitable gift to his Son. I mean, it was God the Father through

his Holy Spirit who opened up our blind eyes and deaf ears and made a gospel which we found repulsive or frightening or silly suddenly so incredibly attractive that it was literally irresistible. I mean, we're Christians today because we were before time began God's intended gift to his Son. I mean not for who we were but for who we were going to become. I mean every one of us, we were all just simple ordinary garden variety sinners when God chose to save not on the basis of our goodness but his. In *Romans 5:7* he says: *For one will scarcely die for a righteous person -- though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die -- but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

See, God saved us by sending his son to die in our place, but he never stopped there. You see, his intention was to take every single one of those redeemed souls and to shape and fashion them into a unique image of his son. Once again, *Romans 8:28* oversees and defines our very existence. It says: *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. And we have a technical name for that process and it starts the moment that you are saved when God's Holy Spirit, this same -- understand this, this very same Holy Spirit that Jesus once promised to his*

disciples, when he begins to live inside you, he begins changing the way you think, he begins changing your desires, he changes your very likes and your dislikes so that they begin to line up with the very nature of Jesus Christ. I mean we are literally being conformed into the image of God's son. And it's by no means an overnight process and it doesn't end until you are completely glorified in Christ's presence. We call the process here and now today sanctification. It's a process of transformation. And here's how God describes it in *2 Corinthians 3:18*, he says: *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* He's speaking of this transforming power of the Holy Spirit that conforms us into the image of Christ. But you know, it never really touched the disciples until Pentecost which was some fifty days after Christ ascended. And before that the disciples still couldn't cut through their own spiritual deafness and blindness to appreciate the God in the flesh who was living among them. And over and over again we see Christ trying to instruct the disciples, and for all practical purposes, I've said this many times, it's like trying to teach a dog how to play chess. There's no there there. They just -- they don't get it. As Jesus said in the garden, *"The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."* And Jesus, he saw an abundance of that weakness. And that didn't hide the



fact that he was incredibly frustrated by that weakness as well.

And I want to look at the conversation that we're going to see this morning and I want to look at it as one of the low points that Jesus had in his relationship with the disciples. I want to take a look at the first part of the conversation because it not only illustrates how dense and impenetrable their blindness really was, it also gives us an insight into how frustrating it was for the Lord Jesus himself to have to deal with. Here's the first part of the conversation. Jesus opens up by saying in *John 14:1*: *"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."* So far so good, I mean, Jesus tells the disciples, believe in God, believe in himself, believe in the preparations that are being made for the future, that's fine. I mean, we hear these -- we hear what he is saying and we understand it, it's reasonable, it's not at all an unreasonable thing to say but then Jesus goes out on a spiritual limb as it were. He says this in verse 4, he says: *"And you know the way to where I am going."* Well, the fact is they had no idea where he was going. In verse 5 it says: *Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the*

way?" Now you have to never forget that outside of the sovereign grace of God through the indwelling Holy Spirit, none of the gospel, none of it's going to penetrate the fallenness of our fallen natures, and really our text this morning is a perfect example of this. Thomas is true to his namesake and he can't see beside a physical place that Jesus has to be referring to. Jesus, we don't know if you're going to Nazareth or Galilee or Jerusalem or Rome or any other place, so how in the world can we know the way? We can't put the address into our GPS if we have don't even know what it is. Verse 6: *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* Now we all know this is one of the most famous quotes in all of scripture but I want you to put yourself into Thomas's shoes as you're hearing these words for the first time. I picture Thomas saying, "What the heck is that supposed to mean?" I mean, it is Jesus stating unequivocally that there is no other way that any other religion in the world could provide a pathway to salvation that is a way to the Father except through himself, Jesus Christ. And it makes perfect sense to our ears because we have the benefit of those 2,000 years of hindsight and the New Testament as well. Thomas had none of that. I mean, all he had was the living presence of Jesus Christ living with him day in, day out for years. And yet to his spiritual eyes and ears, Jesus is speaking absolute mystery. Jesus goes on to explain the mystery by saying in verse

7: *"If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."* Now once again, we hear these words and again, they make perfect sense to us because the New Testament tells us again and again and again that Jesus came to perfectly represent his Father, that every single aspect of who he was was mirrored so perfectly in his Father that he could say over and over again, I and the Father are one. *Hebrews 1* states it this way, it says: *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.* Now another way of putting this would be to say that God wanted us to know all about who he was, and so in order to do that, he created a brand new language, he spoke to us Jesus. It says -- quote -- *"He has spoken to us by his son."* God goes on to say in verse 3 of *Hebrews 1*: *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.* *Colossians* puts it this way: *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.* In *2 Corinthians* he describes Christ in us as *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* Jesus is saying that everything God wanted to reveal about himself he has revealed in the person of his son who just happened to be living with these guys for years.

So Jesus says in verse 7: *"If you had known me, you would have*

known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." And so Philip responds, and Philip's answer, if I can put it as kindly as I can possibly can, it illustrates a blindness and a deafness about who Jesus was and what his purpose was that is nothing short of breathtaking. Verse 8: *Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."* Have you ever seen, there's a commercial out just been out recently, these guys are -- it's obviously some kind of young entrepreneurial think tank and they're all trying to figure out what they're doing, and they're having a brainstorming session and they're saying, okay, we need to improve our communications here and I want your best ideas and understand there's no such thing as a bad idea, and the guy sitting next to him says, "What about carrier pigeons?" And the guy thinks for a second and he says, "Okay, there's one bad idea." Philip's notion was an incredibly bad idea. *"Show us the Father"*? What did Philip think that Jesus was doing for the last three years? Jesus' answer is incredibly gracious. And I can imagine a number of different ways that he would have said it, I mean, I can picture him closing his eyes and doing a face palm, you know, one of these kind of things where you're just kind of sitting there trying to keep your head on your shoulders and then saying in a very calm and in a very controlled voice in verse 9: *"Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip?"* Behind that is the years, the miracles, the parables, the teachings, the examples, all

seeming to have been for naught. He goes on to say: *"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say 'Show us the Father'?"*

As the elders begin distributing the bread, I would like us to consider this morning how frustrating it must have been for Jesus to pour his life into his disciples and realize near the end of his mission that they were still essentially clueless as to who he was. I mean, God in the flesh living among them was still not able to penetrate the spiritual dullness, the natural man's fog that enveloped anything and everything about who God was to them. This is the state of the creatures that Jesus had come to save. This is also the state of you and me. This is the state of all of us before God's Holy Spirit begins to indwell us and own us. Consider the graciousness of God being willing not just to live for such creatures but to die for them as well.

And as the elements are being passed out, consider the warning that we give each time as well about communion itself. This is from *1 Corinthians 11:28-32: 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. I say this each time, I say communion is an extremely serious undertaking and to enter into it in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster. And that if you're not absolutely confident you are a child of the King or if you first need to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you bring your sacrifice to the altar, just pass the elements on. I also say on the other hand you can make the mistake of thinking that unless you're spotlessly perfect, you're somehow unworthy to receive communion. That's a mistake on the other side, because being a child of the King doesn't mean that we don't sin and that we never fail. It means that we recognize salvation as a gift that no one is ever capable of earning that gift by being "good". As Dane Ortlund puts it: "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." It also means that when we do fail we are aware that we have sinned and because God's Spirit is now inside us, it's the exact Spirit we're speaking about, the Spirit that Jesus spoke to his disciples as the Helper that was going to come is the Spirit inside you right now. We grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us because that Spirit is convicting us. But God says in 1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse**

*us from all unrighteousness. So being a child of the King doesn't mean that we are without sin. It means that when we sin we understand we have an advocate with the Father, someone who is speaking in heaven on our behalf. Again, 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." Because we have Jesus's righteousness and not our own, we are free to eat at his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that he purchased for you. He lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so that we could be made worthy of heaven.*

Take some time right now, just take a minute or so and ask yourself if Jesus's disciples could not see through the fog, how is it that I ever could? And realize the incredible gift that you've been given. *1 Corinthians 11, verse 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." Take, and eat.*

There are at least two different kinds of ignorance that we see presented in the New Testament along with two very different kinds

of responses by Jesus to those different types of ignorance. One type I would just call simple natural ignorance; the other kind I would call malevolent ignorance, and Jesus responds differently to each. In John 9 we have an example of what I would call natural ignorance. This is *John 9:1-3*. Speaking of Jesus, it says: *As He was passing by, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples questioned Him: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man or his parents sinned," Jesus answered, "This came about so that God's works might be displayed in him."* The disciples were basically ignorant. I mean, they came from a tradition that says if you play by the rules, God's going to bless you. If you break the rules, God just might curse you as well, and they saw someone blind and in their ignorance they assumed because they saw his blindness as a curse, well, obviously somebody's broken some kind of rules. And what they wanted to know from Christ was was it this man or was it his parents? Jesus explains to them that life doesn't work this way. He says sometimes good things happen to bad people and sometimes bad things happen to good people, and regardless of whether something good or bad has happened to you, God can use it in that *Romans 8:28*, all things working together for good way to bring glory to himself and blessing to you. It was just natural ignorance and Jesus graciously addressed that ignorance.



On the other hand, Jesus also frequently faced and encountered malevolent ignorance. His response to that was actually quite different. This is the same incident shortly after Jesus healed the man born blind. He's caught up in a controversy with those who are offended that he had healed someone's blindness on the Sabbath. See, the Pharisees are deeply offended that he has violated the Sabbath protocols by conducting a healing. Of course the other side insists but nobody but God could do such a miracle, and the Pharisees questions indicated they were not just ignorant but they were maliciously so. In *John 10:24* it says: *Then the Jews surrounded Him and asked, "How long are You going to keep us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, tell us plainly."* It was a simple question reflecting a simple ignorance, but Jesus wasn't buying it at all. Verse 25, he says: *"I did tell you and you don't believe," Jesus answered them. "The works that I do in My Father's name testify about Me."* Jesus then goes on to reveal a spiritual principle that is critical for us to comprehend as we go about the task that Jesus has called us to and that is to share the good news like he did. Jesus goes on to say: *"But you don't believe because you are not My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish -- ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. The Father and I*

are one." Jesus gets right to the heart of the matter by stating that the only way the gospel's ever going to make sense, the only way you're ever going to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd is not by clever argument or by impassioned pleading but by something far more miraculous and far more wonderful, it's by the sovereign choice of God that he chooses you as one of his sheep. I mean, the simplest explanation for why people refuse to believe is the one that Jesus gave right from the start. He says you don't believe because you're not one of my sheep. Now if Philip's impenetrable ignorance couldn't be relieved by the presence of the Lord Jesus himself, then how do you suppose you and I could ever overcome the ignorance of our friends, of our relatives, of our associates? Well, the answer to that is that you and I are never going to be able to overcome that ignorance. But God can. I know many of you have heard me say over and over again that part of the privilege of being a child of God, part of the privilege of being one of the sheep called by the Good Shepherd is the responsibility to tell others of the hope that you have within you, and I know many of you find that a daunting task. I'm not a theologian, you know, we don't talk at all about politics or religion, it's too scary. What if I'm asked a question that I just don't have an answer for? What if I told you that it's impossible to mess up presenting the gospel if you follow these two simple rules. Rule number one is there's never a question for which you do not have an answer. Never. I

mean, often times it will be a simple three-word answer that works every single time you encounter a question that you can't really answer and the three words are: "I don't know." Couldn't be simpler. I mean it effectively answers any theological or philosophical question that somebody will ever raise and you can follow it up by saying, "But I can find out." It's the fear that you have to have some kind of terrific response to every single kind of question that somebody brings up that often times paralyzes us. And secondly it's realizing that the power of the gospel lies in the gospel itself, not in the person presenting it.

This is what God says in *Romans 1:16*. It says: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* You see, the astounding thing to realize here is that Jesus Christ ministered the truth to people who uniformly hated him but he did it knowing that only those who were called by his Father would ever respond and the rest in their malicious ignorance would respond with nothing but malicious actions. And the reaction of the Pharisees to Jesus's words in our example here is proof perfect, I mean, the discussion with the Pharisees starts out really with a malicious question: *Then the Jews surrounded Him and asked, "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."* And you read through the chapter, you get to the

end of it and it ends with a malicious action: *Again the Jews picked up rocks to stone Him.*

So what does this mean to us? Well, Jesus dealt with both kinds of ignorance, the natural ignorance of his disciples and the malicious ignorance of the Pharisees and he dealt with both of them by speaking the truth in love regardless the outcome. I think one of our biggest problems is that we fear confronting our friends and our relatives with the truth because we are so afraid that we're going to be misunderstood. I mean, if it can happen with Jesus and the disciples, there's no question it can happen with the folks that I share the gospel with. I mean, I can't tell you the amount of times that I shared the gospel with the very best of intention only to encounter either or both types of ignorance. Often times I thought about that song that was very popular when I was in high school by the Animals: I'm just a soul whose intentions are good. Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood. Folks, that goes with the territory. That's part of the price you pay.

Let me give you a practical example of how this translates into our attempts to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. A while back I got an email from a friend of mine and he had just come back from a missions trip to South America and he was telling me about an attempt of his to share the gospel with a mutual friend of ours. I

just -- I've excerpted some of what he had written me. He said this or he wrote this. He says: I've been working on "Blank" for years. "Blank" is soulless. He believes in nothing. He couldn't posit a rational argument about any of the positions he somehow holds. What he does is classic. He waits for you to state a position, then he either plays the race card or the right wing evangelical card with no foundational discussion between your position and his pulling those cards. I was talking about Bernie Sanders' tax plan and his only retort was: "What's the matter, John, too righteous to do something for the brown man?" I didn't mention Guat, he was in Guatemala. But I thought to myself, here's a guy who's never done anything for anyone other than himself, sits in his apartment all day smoking dope and drinking and this is all he can say to me? Understand, Jesus had his Philip, my friend John has his Philip. I advised John to lay low for a while and just simply pray for that person because sometimes the anger and the bitterness is so thick, there's no getting through it. But here's what really struck me about the person that John was speaking about. Here's what really caught me. There's no doubt in my mind whatsoever that there was a time in my life when I was that very person. Ignorant, malicious, perhaps a little bit of both, but here is the beauty of the power of the gospel. It's that ignorance, malicious or otherwise, doesn't mean a thing when God fixes his eyes upon someone, when the Shepherd begins gathering his

sheep, and when he does, he doesn't write his gospel in the sky, he writes it on the lips and the tongues of the people who have already had the privilege of being welcomed in as one of his sheep and then he sends them out to pass on that good news.

As the elders begin distributing the cup, I want you to understand that I know what I am speaking about because I've had plenty of people who shared the good news with me that I either mocked or ignored, but I know that God used every single one of them to move me along a pathway that eventuated in the truth. I also know that many of them came away from an encounter with me thinking what a waste of time or perhaps much more likely, what a jackass.

Honestly that's how my friend John and I feel about our mutual friend. But understand something else. Frustration never stopped Jesus and it should never stop us. You know, if folks let their frustration stop them, I would have never heard the gospel. And I honestly believe at some point in heaven I'm going to be reintroduced to every one of those people who shared the gospel with me, and they'll have the joy of knowing that not one of their words was misspoken. And every time I get frustrated about sharing the gospel with people who are spiritually blind, deaf and dumb, I recognize that's exactly what I was when people shared the gospel with me. I think of Jesus investing three years with his disciples, eating with them, ministering with them, showing them

the literal face of God every single day knowing that all of the teachings and all of the insights and all of the miracles would wind up with Philip saying, *"Show us the Father, and it is enough for us."* I can easily imagine Jesus thinking what a waste of time. What a bunch of jackasses. Thank God Jesus didn't stop there. So if the King of the universe is willing to plow through his frustrations with us, then I think we can plow through ours with our friends, our relatives, our associates. But Jesus didn't just minister to the ignorant. He ministered to those who were determined to kill him. I think of Jesus treating the malicious ignorance of those who would nail him to a cross with the ultimate statement of forgiveness for ignorance. It's in *Luke 23:34*, it says: *Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing."* And they divided his clothes and cast lots. That's a forgiveness for ignorance that goes beyond measure. But Jesus knew then and there that God would still be turning hearts so that as Jesus gave up his Spirit, Luke would report in *Luke 23:47*: *When the centurion saw what happened, he began to glorify God, saying, "This man really was righteous!"* See, that's the power of the gospel, when we've got not only the good news, we've got the best news human ears can ever hear. God himself has borne the penalty for our sins and God's Holy Spirit is all the power you need to effectively share the gospel. And when you really get the gospel, you get a passion to share it as well such

that if you don't have that passion, I sometimes wonder if you ever really got the gospel. God sums up this passion to share this way in *Romans 10:13*, he says: *For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call on Him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about Him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who announce the gospel of good things!* What Paul is saying is you can't call on the Lord until you believe the gospel and you can't believe the gospel until you hear the gospel, and you can't hear it until somebody speaks it. And sending out a speaker to Port Jervis or any other part of the planet is what getting the gospel is all about. We are the speakers that God is sending out. See, it's the power of the gospel is what turns hearts, and that power is available to anyone who seeks it. Again, *Romans 1:16*: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* God is offering all of us the legacy of beautiful feet. And what we each have to ask ourselves this morning is do we really want it? And if not, do we really get the gospel? Just consider this morning if frustration or fear or laziness or any other impediment stands in the way of those beautiful feet.

*1 Corinthians 11* 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." So take and drink.*

This is the part we call head, heart, feet. This is where we try to come up with some practical application of what it means to remember Christ and his sacrifice, and along those lines I just wanted to -- most of you got -- as you came in this morning, you got a little piece of paper that came in the middle of your bulletin. If you have a pencil, I would like to get some input on what we are doing on Wednesday nights. We over the years have seen the -- the attendance at Wednesday night diminish to it's gone from a trickle to a tiny, tiny little flow -- and that's not to fault anybody. It's us trying to say, okay, God, this is some time that you've set apart, we want to use it to the best of our ability and if that means changing the way things are done and not doing it because this is the way we've always done it, then let's do that. So we're asking God to give us some input as to how we can better serve this congregation on Wednesday nights. This is not the prayer meeting, this is the Bible study afterwards which is on hiatus right now, and it's on hiatus so that we can better finely tune what it is that we can do. And I just said "I would like a Wednesday night Bible study that is" and then I include a number: study on a book from a Bible, topical study on subjects that affect

me today, a discussion group on subjects that affects me today, training on evangelism, a teaching from a recognized leader, or I honestly can't make a Wednesday night study. And we get that, we understand that people sometimes just have just so much going on. I know a lot of churches have just canceled their Wednesday night services. We don't want to do that. And what -- if we're not going to have a Wednesday night service, maybe it's something where myself and another elder can just rotate through and just come to your house and pray with you and visit with you or we want you to be creative, we want you to think outside the box. If you have any ideas as to what you would like that Wednesday night to look at and if you just honestly say, look, I can't make it, we will put that all in the mix as well. So while you're filling that out, let me just give a couple of other tidbits.

I ask again that you continue to pray for my sister's church which I asked for prayer a couple of weeks ago, it is as I feared, spinning apart, as so often happens. You know, people say why in the world do churches have this terrible stuff happen and I said because the enemy loves to blow up churches. He doesn't much care about blowing up the fire department or the rotary or the little league, and that happens, but blowing up a church is a true triumph for the enemy, so it is the focus of a lot of the enemy's attention. And so I just ask that you would pray for my sister's

church in Scottsdale, Arizona.

And also want to give you an update about Aeden and his progress and some of the thoughts that we're having as to what we're going to do about making this place more handicapped friendly. It's going to involve some very, very significant changes and some of the things that we're thinking of right now are going to involve changing the front, putting in a lift, an elevator type affair so that he can come in in the wheelchair, kind of click it, get up to this level and then get in. We're still in the planning stages. We're trying to get as much input as we can from people who have been down this road, people who have had dealings with handicapped folks, and so we are in the next couple of weeks going to be making some decisions, and so we need your prayer on that, we need people's collective wisdom and collective prayer so that we don't make a mistake. We want this place to be handicapped friendly. We want this place to be not just for Aeden but for anybody else out there who is thinking I'd love to come to church but I can't. So that's the second part. I would like some prayer for that.

And then I personally just want to give some praise and thanks to our young people for the 30-hour famine. Anybody that was in the 30-hour famine, would you stand up? These folks, they need a hand. We have the easy part, we write the checks. I don't get hungry

writing a check. And what these folks did, I'm just -- I want to just say a couple of other things about the youth group. I've had other pastors come to me and say, "Can we send our kids to your youth group because we know we can trust what's going on there." That's a big deal. That's because of Steve and Vanessa. They've done an incredible job with this ministry, and these -- the youth in our church, they don't just have, hey, let's play some games and stick a few Bible verses on it at the end and we've pizza and Jesus and there we go, they understand what it means to love Christ and to work through what it means to love Christ. Often times they put us to shame. So I'm just very thankful for our youth group as well and for the 30-hour famine.

Okay. That having been said, I want to just conclude by asking -- and I spoke about frustration this morning, being frustrated and throwing up your hands and just saying, you know, I'm so fed up with blah, or this person or that person and I know I've been there many, many times, where I've scratched people off, I've written them off. I want to ask you each to picture in your own mind that person that is either the most annoying or the most frightening or the person that you would just toss, the person that you would just not consider and I want you to pray as we pray this morning for that person and I want to pray that God would give you an opportunity some way, somehow, to impact that person with the

gospel because that's what we're here for. We're here to bring glory to Christ by spreading the good news. And so I want to pray that as we conclude this morning that we would just come before God and say, Lord, I give you my frustrations, I give you the fact that I'm afraid of being misunderstood, afraid of being thought of as a religious nut job, I want to put that aside, I want to pray for the wisdom and the sensitivity to know what to say, when to say it and how to say it, and I'm going to trust in your Holy Spirit to do that. Let's pray.

*Father, we just come before you this morning. We are a congregation that is anxious to share the good news. And Lord, we are -- I just -- I just picture you surrounded by your disciples and after years hearing Philip say that perfectly awful response, "Show us the Father," and how frustrating that must have been to you and I'm sure many of us here have been very frustrated by our attempts to share the gospel only to be misunderstood and have it flung back in our face. I want to pray right now, Lord, for every single individual that is in the collective minds of each of us as we're thinking about that person or maybe that person that it's just too scary to imagine sharing the gospel with, I pray that you would go ahead of us, that you would give us the courage, give us the opportunity and give us the means to present your good news. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*