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

**April 4, 2021**

**Easter Sunday - The Emotional Cost of Easter**

**Selected Scriptures**

**Prayer:** *Father, we praise you and thank you for this, this is the best day of the year, Lord, this is the day we celebrate your victory, and we are just so pleased to be able to do just that. So Lord, again this day we're going to again look into your book, we're going to re-examine some of the aspects of that victory that you won for us. We're going to be looking specifically at what it cost you emotionally. And so Lord, as we do this, I just pray for, again, the gift of the presence of your Holy Spirit, may you guide us into your word, may you accompany us, may it be of permanent value, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, last week we looked at Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and it was really the formal beginning of the ultimate battle that Jesus would wage on our behalf, and it ended on Easter morning. Now the world looks at Easter as a time of renewal, a time of rebirth and Christians look at Easter as the site of the greatest battle that ever took place. You've often heard me refer to the fact that we are in a war, a proxy war between the kingdoms of

darkness and the kingdoms of light. Well that war ended in a victory over two thousand years ago when Jesus rose from the grave.

Many people love Easter but I don't think they really understand what Easter represents. You see, God and man had become alienated because the first man and woman committed treason against God by siding with God's enemy, Satan. And they didn't just disobediently decide to eat some fruit. They exchanged the perfection they had enjoyed for an imperfection that would infect every subsequent son or daughter from Adam from Eden until today. And because they were the first man and woman, their brokenness extended to every one of their offspring. If you remember the very first son Cain committed the first murder of Abel. And so on. God and man were inseparably apart because God was still perfect and man no longer was. God's perfection included his perfect justice and so a perfect God could no longer have fellowship with his imperfect creatures. God's solution was to enact his perfect justice on the creatures by declaring the death penalty on all of us. This is how God put it in *Romans 5:12*, he said: *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.* God's solution to the sin that brought death to all of us was to become one of us and live a perfect life so that he could stand in our place to take the penalty for that sin. God would become not only the justifier

exacting the penalty of the sin but he would also be the just one who was paying for it. The enemy who had successfully tempted Adam and Eve in the garden knew that Jesus was here and he knew that he was here to destroy his works, to plunder his kingdom while ransoming and rescuing his sheep by paying in full the just penalty for those sheep. The place where that penalty would be paid for was a place called Calvary. And there in one final grand offering, a perfect human who had led a perfectly sinless life would willingly take on the sins of all of his sheep, literally becoming the sin of the sheep he was saving. At the cross Jesus did precisely that. *2 Corinthians* says: *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Now the reason why the stakes of the cross were so high is because Jesus had to meet the requirements of a perfect sacrifice in order to pay the price of his sheep's sin. If Jesus had failed in any way in being that perfect sacrifice, he couldn't have substituted himself for his sheep because he wouldn't have been a perfect substitute. Instead he would have failed the test. He would have stayed in the grave with the collective guilt of all of our sin. So Jesus coming up from the grave represents the perfect sacrifice being perfectly accepted, and that's what we celebrate at Easter. The reason why Jesus had the ultimate victory over Satan at the

cross is because perfect justice had now been satisfied so that perfect mercy could be extended to anyone who puts their faith in Jesus as Lord. That's why God would say in *Colossians 2*: *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

I mean it's no accident that God is speaking here in a militaristic sort of way as if the cross was some kind of battle. It was. That's precisely what it was. It was the epic battle and the forces of darkness were convinced as Jesus went into the grave that they had won, that Jesus' sacrifice just wasn't perfect enough and had not been acceptable. So for three days the universe just waited on tiptoe for that glorious Easter morning when Jesus, having disarmed the powers and authorities by fully paying the penalty for his sheep did make a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Jesus won that victory but the emotional toll that had took was enormous. It was immeasurable. We started last week looking at Jesus' emotional response to Palm Sunday and this morning, Easter Sunday, I want to continue examining the emotional toll it cost Jesus to win for us that

victory. So this morning I want to start at the very beginning of Jesus' passion and crucifixion. I want to trace some of the emotional states that Jesus went through to give us a fuller picture of just how much Jesus loved us and how much he sacrificed in order to rescue us.

So the first emotion that I want to look at this morning would be that of apprehension. One thing we seldom realize about Jesus' public ministry is however present the cross was in every aspect of his life. We can actually go back to the very beginning when Jesus was born and he's visited by the three wise men. We're all familiar with the gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh: Gold representing Jesus' kingly role, frankincense representing his holiness but that final gift of myrrh, that was something that was used almost exclusively as an embalming spice. You see, right from the start Jesus was reminded he was born to die. He wasn't put on this planet to be a great teacher or a great leader or great example -- although he certainly was all those things -- no, he came to this planet to offer up his life as a living sacrifice. And all through his life Jesus knew that his ultimate point and purpose was to be slain as the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. I just want you to just take a moment to just think about how that anxiety, how that would wear on you, that apprehension, knowing every single day of your life was all

pointing to one great event that also happens to be the greatest nightmare you could ever imagine. I mean we're told over and over again: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* And we know Jesus himself said: *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"* Okay. So was Jesus guilty of not practicing what he preached? Well, actually the only person who has ever lived who had the right to genuine apprehension and anxiety would have been Jesus, because all during his life he knew there was coming a time when the very resources that allow us not to be apprehensive would be withdrawn from him, leaving him utterly and completely alone to fight this final battle by himself.

Well, the next emotion would be apprehension turning into dread, and dread was clearly what Jesus was experiencing in the garden of Gethsemane. *Matthew 26* says: *Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."* He took Peter and the two sons of

*Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."* Luke's gospel adds: *And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.* Apologetics Press has this to say about that, it says this: "A thorough search of the medical literature demonstrates that such a condition, while admittedly rare, does occur in humans. Commonly referred to as hematidrosis or hemohidrosis, this condition results in the excretion of blood or blood pigment in the sweat. Under conditions of great emotional stress, tiny capillaries in the sweat glands can rupture, thus mixing blood with perspiration. This condition has been reported in extreme instances of stress. During the waning years of the 20th century, 76 cases of hematidrosis were studied and classified into categories according to causative factors. The most frequent causes of the phenomenon were found to be 'acute fear' and 'intense mental contemplation.'"

There's no doubt Jesus suffered acute fear, that he suffered dread, and for some that makes Jesus' death less than heroic. We see Jesus sweating great drops of blood over his impending crucifixion

and we know that some no doubt went to that same crucifixion defiantly. I mean if you isolate Jesus' physical torment from his spiritual torment, you wind up with a Jesus who may seem a little less than heroic. But it was not the crucifixion that caused Jesus to sweat great drops of blood. What in all likelihood was happening at that moment was that Jesus was beginning the process of taking on our sin, of having his absolutely perfect holiness invaded with the stench and the horror of the collected guilt of his sheep. Mark's gospel describes Jesus' troubled soul beginning in the garden of Gethsemane this way. It says: *Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed.* The Greek word for "trouble" here is the word "ekthambeo". The word is actually unique; it means to be utterly astonished. The King James translates it very well, it translates it with two words, says "sore amazed," and that phrase describes a third emotional state of Jesus, it's a combination of terror and amazement. Terror at the horror of the coming ordeal, amazement that it's so much worse than anyone, including Jesus, could have ever imagined. You see, for all time Jesus had been anticipating what the actuality of his perfection taking in imperfection would be like, but it was only at the moment that he began experiencing it that he would realize that even for God, this was something far



worse than even God could imagine. I mean it's entirely possible that as Jesus entered into the garden he began to be engulfed with human sin. And it was that process of absorbing our human filth and not the fear of physical pain that drove Jesus to the ground and made him sweat blood. *Mark 14 says: And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

You see it was that horror, it wasn't crucifixion that had Jesus saying, *"Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."* That emotional state was met by yet another set of emotions, that of intense loneliness, bewilderment, and a sense of betrayal. Jesus is staggered, he's sore amazed at the enormity of the awfulness of this experience and so he begins to reach out to his disciples and again we read: *And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* You see, it's one thing to be lonely in the absence of people but

it's another thing entirely to be surrounded by those who you think you are close to and yet feel utterly and completely alone. And as we pointed out last time, Jesus felt emotion unlike any human being ever feels it. I mean, our emotions are filtered through our fallenness, they're filtered through our sinfulness, our sense of self-protection, our ability to fool ourselves that things really aren't so bad as we think they are. You have to understand, Jesus had none of those filters on his emotions. Everything was one hundred percent stark truth including the absence of support from the men that he had poured his life into the previous three years. Jesus knew exactly what was going to take place. He didn't have the luxury of saying maybe things will turn out better. Peter, James, and John were the dearest members of his inner circle and yet they were snoring away at the one time Jesus desperately needed them.

That was only the beginning of yet another emotion that Jesus would experience. This one is disappointment; the disappointment he would experience from his disciples. It was unfolding exactly the way he knew it would. At one point Jesus repeated a prophecy from Zechariah knowing that he was watching it fulfill itself before his eyes. *And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'"* I mean if you remember it was literally hours before

when he told Peter who was bragging about how loyal he is to Jesus, it was just a few hours previous he told Peter before the rooster crowed he would deny him three times. There was no denying that these men who were literally asleep at the wheel during the first part of Jesus' trial, they'd also be physically scattered by their own fear and terror when push came to shove. Jesus' bewilderment at his betrayal was tempered by the fact that it was no way a shock or a surprise.

The next emotion that Jesus would experience was that of isolation and abandonment because his Father at that time was in the process of abandoning him. God's perfection had no choice but to reject and abandon the imperfection that Jesus was now becoming. And that rending, that tearing apart of a relationship that existed for all eternity had now come to pass because the Father's perfection and Jesus' acquired imperfection could not coexist. The personal agony that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit underwent that moment is something no human being could even begin to comprehend. You know, we see the abandonment only from Jesus' end but the fact is the agony spread out in three different directions. Father, Son and the Holy Spirit each made the ultimate sacrifice in order to secure our rescue and ransom. You know, if you read the accounts of the crucifixion, you never find Jesus crying out about physical torture because as hideous as it was, nothing, nothing compared to

the spiritual torture as he who knew no sin became sin for us. No human, in fact no entity in the entire universe has any idea what Jesus went through as he was transformed from flawless perfection to the living embodiment of sin itself. And we know that the physical torture aspects of the crucifixion were not what caused Jesus to be sore afraid and cry out. In fact all during his trial, all during his execution he never cried out once. *Isaiah 53* says: *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.*

Well, he remained silent because there was another emotion that was flowing through him, and what he was experiencing was the intense feeling of guilt. Jesus time and again during the process of his arrest, torture and crucifixion was questioned repeatedly. I mean, he was questioned by the high priest, he was questioned by the Sanhedrin, he was questioned by Pilate, and his silence proved absolutely baffling. It says: *Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"* You see, when it came to his guilt or his innocence, Jesus answered not a word. The reason was simple. That Jesus, the spotless one, had become Jesus now the guilty one, not for his sins but for ours. *Isaiah 53* says: *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our*

*iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 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.*

Along with guilt came yet another emotion and this one was self-loathing. It was the self-loathing that fully embracing our sinfulness entailed. *Psalm 22* takes us into the very heart of Jesus during the crucifixion where he says: *But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people.*

Another reason why Jesus was a troubled soul was that he now had to face the wrath of his Father, not for his sins but for ours. And again *Psalm 22* takes us into the mind of Jesus as he faces his Father guilty of our sin. The emotion this time is one of abandonment. *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent.* Jesus was forsaken. He was abandoned by his followers, by his disciples and by his own Father. He who knew no sin now had on the cross become sin itself and Jesus' own Father had no choice but to thrust him out. I just picture Jesus hanging on the cross suspended between heaven and earth having been rejected by both. The flawless one who delighted

in his fellowship with his Father from all eternity had on the cross become every single repulsive thing that sin represents, and sin itself became objectified and quantified past, present and future placed on the head of Jesus who had to bear it absolutely alone. It was far worse than any external torment that Jesus ever experienced, and we know that it made his body almost unrecognizable as human. *Isaiah 52 says: As many were astonished at you -- his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind.*

You know, I know one of the things that used to bother me about the cross was that from start to finish, as awful as it was, it was just six hours. Mark's gospel says that it started the third hour, which is 9:00 o'clock in the morning, and Matthew's gospel describes the end at 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, that's the ninth hour. And as crucifixions go, that was extraordinarily fast. What was unique about crucifixion itself was designed to prolong agony, I mean, it was not designed to end life. Victims of crucifixion often lasted for days. Here in this case Jesus is dying after six hours and it surprised even Pilate. *Mark 15 says: Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the*

*centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.*

Now I once heard a cynic say six hours on a cross and you make such a big deal out of that? But again, it completely misses the point. The point is that Jesus' suffering was far more than physical. And the fact that he hung for six earth hours ignores the fact that for God time works completely differently than it does for us. I mean it was God who makes this statement about time in *2 Peter* that: *With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* I mean God is quite capable of finding an eternity that would exist in the time that exists between seconds. So who knows what the actual length of Jesus' suffering was. We also know that Christ had to pay the equivalent of an eternity in hell for every one of his sheep in order to perfectly satisfy his own justice. We also know that Christ didn't die from any earthly condition brought on by his crucifixion, I mean, it wasn't a heart attack, it wasn't suffocation that ended Jesus' life because he was the author of life itself. And Jesus made that quite clear when he said in *John 10*: *"I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."* Jesus didn't

die in the sense that you and I die. He died by voluntarily giving up his spirit; and he didn't do that, he wouldn't do that until the final drop of the cup of God's wrath was fully consumed. John's gospel describes the actual moment when that event occurred. It says this: *After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

Actually Jesus didn't use those three words. The Greek language uses only one word, "tetelestai" for the three words that we translate "it is finished." And many of you know that that word is actually a technical term that's used in accounting to indicate when a debt is paid in full. It's said that when prisoners were being released from prison that they would have that word "tetelestai" stamped on their document, meaning that the sentence was finished, that it had been paid for. Well, that payment had an emotional cost and it cost Jesus anxiety and dread and sore amazement, loneliness, disappointment, bewilderment, betrayal, self-loathing, isolation, abandonment and guilt itself, none of which was deserved. *Isaiah 53 says: He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from*



*whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

Jesus hung on that cross isolated, rejected and abandoned, absorbing our guilt until the debt of every single one of his sheep had been paid for in full. And after Jesus died, he was taken down from the cross and placed in the tomb of a wealthy man who donated it, Joseph of Arimathea. For three days the universe held its breath. For three days it awaited the outcome of Jesus' sacrifice, and then the greatest event in the history of mankind unfolded. Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the

*Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'*" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord" -- and that he had said these things to her. Mark's gospel adds this sad comment: *She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.* The empty tomb had proved that Jesus' sacrifice was accepted and the debt had been paid. The very place chosen by Satan, by Rome and by the religious leaders as the ultimate disgrace for Jesus turned out to be the very place where their failure was put on display. And *having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

Well, after Jesus' resurrection we find even more emotions that begin to come into play. It's not triumphalism, it's not swagger but compassion, urgency and finally a good dose of indignation. The risen Jesus is clearly upset but it's not with the world, it's with his disciples, and it's not for what you might think it would be. We spoke last time about Jesus being indignant and annoyed at his disciples for forbidding the little ones to come unto him. What Jesus was indignant about after defeating death itself was not the abandonment or betrayal or desertion and denial of his disciples, it wasn't that they all scattered when he needed them

most that bothered Jesus, instead it was the same thing that bothered him throughout most of his public ministry; it was an emotion that Jesus never, never gave in to. It was unbelief. There's two types of unbelief; one is fatal, one is crippling. Fatal unbelief is the kind that made the Pharisees and the religious leaders dig their feet and more and more the evidence that they saw that Jesus was indeed Lord. It reached its peak right after Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. Here's a person that he's not only dead, he's in the process of decomposing and at Jesus' command he steps forward fully restored and alive; and the response of the people around him is to recognize that a miracle has taken place that can only be accomplished by someone who had the power of life over death. The response of the Pharisees is: This guy's got to die. That's fatal unbelief. Jesus pitied such people enough for him to weep for them as he entered into Jerusalem. That wasn't what really got to Jesus. What got to Jesus was the crippling kind of unbelief because it infected the sheep that he had come to save, the sheep that refused to trust him fully in everything in spite of the lengths that he had gone to to prove himself trustworthy. After Jesus had risen from the dead, he wouldn't have it.

Actually his first meeting with the disciples after the resurrection did not go well at all. This is *Mark 16*. It says:

Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. How'd you like to be in that room? How'd you like to be in that room hearing your king taking you apart for the many times you refused to believe? How'd you like to be Thomas who said: "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe" only to have the risen king himself call his bluff. Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas -- and I just can't imagine how he said this, what the inflexions were -- "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." So Thomas fumbles out a response: Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" And Jesus is not inclined to let him off the hook. Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." My guess is that Thomas was looking for a crack in the floor or a hole in the wall, some place that he could slink out of there.

But it wasn't just Thomas who heard it from a risen Jesus.

Scripture records another substance of the crippling kind of

unbelief that Jesus' distraught disciples had as they were discussing his death. This is Luke 24, it says: *That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?" Just as an aside, that must be the most pregnant two-word sentence in the history of mankind -- "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had*

*said, but him they did not see."* That's crippling unbelief right there. *And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

Jesus unloads on them, I mean, he's chiding them for two different reasons. He calls them fools, says they're fools for believing not just in him but in also all that the prophets had spoken. Now I want to offer a defense to them. They didn't have the New Testament weaving all the different parts of the story together so it fits into one coherent whole, the creation of man, his fall, his need for a redeemer in Christ, Christ's perfect life and death, that all came to the disciples in little bits and pieces all during Christ's life and all of it made even more sense with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost who Jesus promised he would send to teach these folks. Jesus said: *But 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.* See, it was the power of God's indwelling Holy Spirit that cured the disciples of their crippled faith, that enabled each of them to give their lives totally to Christ. But that was two thousand

years ago. We have the complete Bible today, the complete story from Adam and Eve in Genesis all the way to the final battle in Revelation, the whole story of the war between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness all laid out for us in a book I've often said we can buy for about a buck. We not only have the book, we have the same Holy Spirit living within us if we are one of his.

You know, what started with one man and twelve disciples now numbers about two and a half billion, that's with a B. And the question that we have to ask ourselves this Easter morning is the same question that Jesus asked of the very same crippled faith he encountered two thousand years ago. This is what Jesus asked in *Luke 18*. He said: *"Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"* See, faith was a rare commodity two thousand years ago and it's still a rare commodity today, and that's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died a perfect death, rose from the dead and paid the full price of our sin. That's not faith in an institution, that's not faith in a denomination, that's not faith in a set of cultural rules, it's faith in a person, the man Christ Jesus. I don't know how many of the two and a half billion people on this planet who are said to be Christians actually believe in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, but I'm certain it's a small fraction of that huge number. How many have been healed like the disciples

were of the crippled faith that they were walking about with who believed Jesus enough to make it change the way they live their lives, who actually point their lives in the direction of Christ and kingdom as if nothing else matters, because the fact is nothing else matters. Jesus poured out everything that he had for us that day physically, spiritually and emotionally. This Easter morning it's time for us to give back to him the one thing that he was still searching for, something the Holy Spirit has empowered us to give him that turns our crippled faith into a source of genuine joy that made his sacrifice worthwhile. *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.* Let's pray.

*Father, what a gift you've given to us in your Son. And we go through the catalog of emotions that he had to feel, almost a dozen of these awful emotions, unfiltered as we filter ours, raw, stark, how they must have worn away at him in addition to all of the physical torment that he underwent. And Lord, I know Jesus asked that question, will I find faith in the world? So easy to walk around with a crippled faith that says maybe this, maybe that, maybe I'll hedge my bets, maybe this, maybe that. Father, I pray for a holy boldness that says there is nothing else that matters but Christ and kingdom. That one who gave his life for us*



*physically, spiritual and emotionally is worthy of nothing less. I pray that you would empower us to share this story, empower us to live that life. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*