

Pastor Tom Mortenson

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The World Cannot Hate You, But it Does Hate Me

John 7:1-20

Prayer: *Father God, we just thank you that without the blood of Jesus, we have no standing whatsoever and you were willing to give the blood of Jesus. We just praise you and thank you for the gift. We praise you and thank you for a time when we can gather together again once a month where we can focus on you, on the cross, on what it is that you've done for us there at the cross. So I pray this morning, Lord, that you would give us a special unction, a special outpouring of your Holy Spirit, that we might grasp anew what it is you've done, that you would give us the ability to appreciate it and to again look into your word and make it a permanent part of our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as you know, again, this is the first Sunday of the month, and this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and there for the last time he celebrated a Passover supper with them. Matthew 26 describes it, 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 all, 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 the bread and he took the wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and of his blood, and then he asked the disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to repeat that remembrance of his sacrifice on a regular basis. That is what we call "the Lord's table," and we celebrate it once a month, and we do that by meditating first on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, then by examining ourselves, asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sins, by then confessing our sins, and then 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."*

We have been following the life of Jesus, we have worked our way up so far to the seventh chapter of the Gospel of John, spent a lot of time in John chapter 6 which is basically the wholesale rejection of Christ by the multitudes; I've called it the macro rejection.

John Chapter 7 is more a series of micro rejections. We looked at that the last time. It begins first with his own family, with his own brothers. This is John 7:1-5, it says: *After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples may also see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world."* For not even his brothers believed in him. Well, the good news is last time out, we learned that Jesus' brothers were all miraculously saved. You know, it was impossible to imagine that Jesus' brothers who had been with him his entire life would suddenly begin to see their older brother as God in the flesh, but that's exactly what happened. That's what took place. We know that all of Jesus' brothers were miraculously converted after Jesus had ascended into heaven. We know that because they are among the 120 that assembled in the upper room when the Holy Spirit descended on them according to Acts 1:14 which says: *All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.* And furthermore, we know that among those brothers was James who became the bishop of the church at Jerusalem and Judas who wrote the book of Jude. So *"What is impossible with men is possible with God."*

One thing that our passage this morning points out is that for Jesus, timing is everything, and at this point Jesus' brothers, well, they're not yet saved. Again, John 7:5-8 says this: *(For not even his brothers believed in him.) Jesus told them, "My time has not yet arrived, but your time is always at hand. The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me because I testify about it -- that its deeds are evil. Go up to the festival yourselves. I am not going up to the festival yet, because my time has not fully come."*

Well, there was a reason why Jews refused to go up to the festival. John 7:1 says: *After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.* That's a very good reason. You know, should he have arrived there in a very public kind of way, they would have begun already the process of his sacrifice before its appointed time. As we know, timing was everything to Jesus. In John 7:9, he says: *After he had said these things, he stayed in Galilee. After his brothers had gone up to the festival, then he also went up, not openly but secretly. The Jews were looking for him at the festival and saying, "Where is he?"* Now, they were not looking to chat. They were looking for him all right but they were looking to arrest him. See, months before, Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath,

and in the process, he had deeply shamed the religious leaders. And for many of them, this really was the final straw. They had decided back then, then and there that he had to go, and Jesus who knew all things knew that they were looking for him with murderous intent. You know, many in that crowd knew that as well. John 7:25 says: *Some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Isn't this the man they want to kill?"* See, the festival was drawing people from all over Israel. Verse 12 says: *There was a lot of discussion about him among the crowds. Some were saying, "He's a good man." Others were saying, "No, on the contrary, he's deceiving the people." Still, nobody was talking publicly about him because they feared the Jews.*

You see, the opinions about Jesus ran the gamut, they ran the gamut from good man to deceiver, and because the temple authorities had not yet spoken, people had their opinions but they were not about to have them out loud, because to go against the temple authorities meant to risk the possibility of excommunication; and for a Jew at that time, that would mean being cut off socially, economically, religiously. It would be a terrible, terrible thing for them, so no one was about to risk having a public opinion about this man Jesus. The only opinion that was genuinely rooted in reality was the opinion that Jesus had, and he had already made it very clear what was underneath the world's opinion of him. Jesus told them in

verse 7: *"The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me because I testify about it -- that its deeds are evil."* Now, Jesus so matter of factly acknowledges what nobody in our culture even imagines about the way the world relates to him, *"but it does hate me."* This is not the maudlin ramblings of some self-absorbed prophet whose ministry is starting to fail. This is not the inner thoughts of someone who is deeply depressed. This is a simple statement of fact. It's a statement made by the only one who knows the inside of every heart that ever lived. It is a fact rejected with much vehemence today. It is rejected with as much vehemence today as it was rejected when it was originally stated by Jesus. And what happened next is proof that Jesus knew precisely what he was talking about. This is John 7:14-20, it says: *When the festival was already half over, Jesus went up into the temple complex and began to teach. Then the Jews were amazed and said, "How does he know the scriptures, since he hasn't been trained?" Jesus answered them, "My teaching isn't mine but it's from the one who sent me. If anyone wants to do his will, he will understand whether the teaching is from God or if I am speaking on my own. The one who speaks for himself seeks his own glory. But he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him. Didn't Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law! Why do you want to kill me?" "You have a demon!" the crowd responded, "Who wants to kill you?"*

Well, they asked Jesus how he was able to speak with such great authority, and Jesus, well, he gives his questioners four separate answers. Answer number one, Jesus said he spoke for God. In verse 17, he said: *"If anyone wants to do his will, he will understand whether the teaching is from God or I am speaking on my own."*

Well, he said this because they understood and he knew Jesus spoke with absolute authority. He spoke with a wisdom and a knowledge of the scripture that greatly surpassed anything they had ever seen or heard before. John 7:15: *Then the Jews were amazed and said, "How does he know the scriptures, since he hasn't been trained?"* Well, Jesus knew the scripture because Jesus is the author of the scripture, every jot and every tittle.

Answer two was that Jesus claimed he was perfectly righteous. He said, *"But he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him."* Now, we can aim this directly at those who say that Jesus came to be a teacher or philosopher or great public leader or politician or whatever, you know, we can say that such a person would hardly claim that there's no unrighteousness in him unless of course there was no unrighteousness in him. To make a claim of flawless perfection, to flat out declare there's no unrighteousness in me, well, that's something that only God could do. I mean, this scripture alone

eliminates the idea that Jesus was anything less than what he claimed to be, God in the flesh. And as God, only Jesus had the right to exercise judgment over us.

And answer number three, Jesus begins to exercise that judgment, and he declares that they were all law breakers. In verse 19, he says: *"Didn't Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law!"* You see, Jesus is the creator. We are his creatures. And as his creatures, we and they are accountable to him. And so he called them on it: *"None of you keeps the law!"* That's what he said, and that is the heart of the matter.

You see, we wonder why is there this gut level hatred for Jesus, and the answer is actually rather simple. The answer is that Jesus is acting like God. And quite frankly, we want to be God. I mean, we may not make a claim to deity but we are all united in our fallenness by a desire to act as our own gods, to act as if we are unfettered by any boundaries whatsoever, let alone the boundaries imposed on us by a holy God. The fact is they and we resent God's intrusion into our sovereignty. You know, that's really behind the lure of atheism. Atheism really posits that no one and nothing exists as the final judge and jury over our behavior. That's immensely attractive to a lot of people. Over against that, we have the gospel which claims that a personal holy God has a claim

on us, on our life, and on our behavior; and it also says this holy God will stand in judgment over us. That's why Jesus says in John 7:7: *"The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me because I testify about it -- that its deeds are evil."* Just picture, picture if you will Jesus' state of mind right here and right then. He's come to the Feast of Tabernacles privately because he knows the religious authorities are there and they're there to kill him, they're there to arrest him. You see, without Jesus, they had free reign to play the role of God almighty and they had been playing it to the hilt. And now in their eyes, here's Jesus, this -- this hick from the backwater, and he's standing right there in the temple stealing their thunder. And furthermore, he's once again standing in judgment of them. See, he had done this before, months before. And once again, Jesus' response to their religious hypocrisy had this familiar sound to it.

Now, months before the religious leaders had objected to Jesus after having healed the man, telling him get up, take up your mat and walk. They objected because he told them that on the Sabbath. You see, the leaders had taken the Sabbath rest that Moses had spoken of and had twisted it and distorted it to make it yet another means of exercising their own power over the people. I mean, they didn't care at all that Jesus had healed somebody. What they cared about was that he had done it on the Sabbath. You know,

back then Jesus addressed their hypocrisy directly by saying this in John 5:45, he said: *"Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me. But if you don't believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"* See, to those leaders, those were fighting words, those were stinging words, those were words of judgment; and ever since that day, they were looking for a way to take Jesus out. And all the while they were posturing as servants of God and followers of Moses. So here teaching in the temple on this very day is the one that Moses had been pointing to judging their hypocrisy, and yes indeed, they hated him. John 7:21 says: *"I did one work, and you are all amazed," Jesus answered. "Consider this: Moses has given you circumcision -- not that it comes from Moses but from the fathers -- and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses won't be broken, why are you angry at me because I made a man entirely well on the Sabbath?"*

See what Jesus is doing? He's using the same Sabbath logic that he used before to destroy their argument. You see, the law had called for newborn males to be circumcised on the eighth day, and Jesus, he knew that the leaders had no problem doing the work of a circumcision on the Sabbath because if it fell on the eighth day,

it fell on the eighth day, the law said do it, and it was common practice at the time. And yet these same people claimed to be morally outraged at what Jesus was doing, that he would actually heal somebody on a Sabbath. So on the Sabbath, Jesus says, let me get this right, on the Sabbath the work of circumcision is perfectly fine, but the work of healing a whole person is forbidden. You see, the hypocrisy was breathtaking, and Jesus did not hesitate to point it out to them. The result produced a murderous intent. It's really what prompted answer number four.

Verse 19: *"Didn't Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law! Why do you want to kill me?"* See, right out of the blue, Jesus confronts the religious leaders with the fact that they really do want to kill him, and Jesus knew precisely what he was saying because he knew exactly what was in everyone's heart. He had exercised his divine right as judge and exactly as he predicted, they responded with murderous hatred. That's why Jesus is able to say again in John 7:7: *"The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me because I testify about it -- that its deeds are evil."* So Jesus confronts the intent of their heart and he brings it front and center. *"Why do you want to kill me?"* The response of the crowd is as predictable as their heart. *"You have a demon!"* That's what they said. *"You have a demon! Who wants to kill you?"* Jesus, are you out of your mind is what they're saying. Are you paranoid? Are you even possessed? How could you

make such a ridiculous statement? You know, that's exactly the response you will get today if you suggest to someone that he hates Jesus. Are you out of your mind? Are you paranoid? Are you possessed? How could you make such a ridiculous statement? Why should I hate Jesus? John 7:7 perhaps: *"The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me because I testify about it -- that its deeds are evil."* That's why. Evidently some of the crowd saw that Jesus was spot on in his assessment of their reaction to them, because John 7:25 again says: *Some of the people in Jerusalem were saying, "Isn't this the man they want to kill?"* And we know for a fact that six months after Jesus made that statement, he was lying dead in a tomb, killed by the very crowd that refused to believe him. Killed not as a victim of circumstance, not as a victim of flawed justice but killed as a willing sacrifice offered up as a ransom for you and for me. Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, left heaven itself, came to earth, and lived his life perfectly so that he could offer to exchange his perfect righteousness for our sin.

As the elders begin to distribute the bread, I would like us to take a moment to consider the Jesus we are following. Romans 5:6-8 says this: *For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly. For rarely will someone die for a just person -- though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. But God proves his own love for us in that while*

we were still sinners, Christ died for us!

As the elements are being distributed, consider also the warning that God gives us in 1 Corinthians 11:28, which says this: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* Just to repeat what I say each time, communion is extremely serious business, and to enter into it in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster, and if you are not absolutely confident that you are a child of the King, just pass the elements on when they come to you. I say it every month, nobody's going to look at you like you're weird or odd or strange; they'll think that you're wise. I also want to add on the other hand, we can make the mistake of thinking that unless we are spotlessly perfect, we are unworthy to receive communion, and that, too, is a mistake. Being a child of the King does not mean that we don't sin and that we never fail. What it means is that when we do fail, we are aware that we have sinned because God's spirit is now within us, convicting us of our sin and so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse

us. 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 does not mean that we are without sin. It means that when we do sin, we have an advocate with the Father. Again, 1 John 2:1: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* And so because we have Jesus' righteousness and not our own, we are then free to eat from his table. So if you love the Lord, do not deny yourself the privilege that Jesus has purchased for you. Take some time and consider this Jesus who died for us.

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

One of the most under reported and overlooked facts of the gospel is the hatred that mankind has for Jesus Christ. Jesus said so. I mean, we just testified to that, he didn't just say it once, he said it repeatedly. We've already looked at John 7:7: *"The world cannot hate you, but it does hate me because I testify about it --*

that its deeds are evil." John 15:23 says: *"The one who hates me also hates my Father."*

Jesus certainly seemed to spend a lot of time talking about hate and the hatred that the world had for him and his Father but you know, the vast majority of Jesus' words about that kind of hate and hatred were centered not on him but on the hatred that his followers would receive because of him. Listen to what the scripture says here. This is Luke 6:22: *"Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!"* John 15:19: *"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of this world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."* John 15:18: *"If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you."* And in the Epistle of John, in John 3:13, John says: *"Do not be surprised, brothers, if the world hates you."* So what is Jesus saying in all of these statements? What he's saying is if you truly are one of my disciples, then you will begin to taste some of the hatred I taste. And to the extent that the world sees Christ in you, they will hate that Christ as they've hated him.

One of the great problems that the church has and one of the great tasks that each individual Christian has is the task of having that

which is offensive about my faith be Jesus Christ and him alone. There are many, many folks who just flat out do hateful things in the name of Christ, things for which a hateful push back is not only normal but expected. In the name of Christ, political and cultural wars have been fought, segregation has been championed, and people have been exploited emotionally, sexually, financially, there are lots of legitimate reasons for people to have antipathy towards Christ and Christians.

One of the most popular quotes attributed to Mahatma Gandhi was a statement he made in answer to a reporter's question on why he was not a Christian. He had had a lot of interest in Christianity and explored it a great deal and decided against it, and a reporter asked him why he was not a Christian. He said this, he said, "I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." He was speaking a very hard truth. And while I don't want to ignore or downplay the many significant and legitimate reasons why the world rejects the gospel falsely represented by those who are so unlike our Christ, the fact remains that the one true perfect embodiment of the love of God, the only perfectly righteous spokesperson for God, Jesus Christ himself, was hated for who he was. He was hated because his perfect demeanor and his perfect actions, i.e., his perfect life, was the light that highlighted this world's darkness. I'll say it again, *"The world*

cannot hate you," Jesus says, "but it does hate me because I testify about it -- that its deeds are evil."

Now, anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear has noticed no doubt that as of late, our culture seems to have re-discovered how much it hates the gospel of Jesus Christ and therefore Jesus himself. You know, it buries that hatred in words like "marriage equality" or "tolerance" or "diversity," but that type of tolerance is absolutely intolerant of Jesus and his biblical worldview. And its diversity is limited to those who see that worldview as unacceptable. See, what it is really saying is that in our culture, we will have no authority, that is, no God over us, and we have entered into a unique time in our culture where things are very similar to the way they were thousands of years ago in the time of judges in Israel when *"Everyone did what was right in their own eyes,"* or in the time of the prophet Isaiah when he warned his people: *"Woe to them who call good evil and evil good."* I think what is astounding to most of us is that within the blink of an eye, we find ourselves right in the middle of those times. It is a time when a clear, open, and compassionate proclamation of the truth of the gospel will now earn you labels like "bigot," "hater," "homophobe."

Well, I've got one piece of advice for all of us who are feeling

that kind of pressure. It's really simple. Get used to it. Get used to it. This is the new normal. This has been quite a week in the life a nation, in the life of the church. Just to kind of go about what happened just this week, I read there was an organization that went to the New York Times and went to buy a full page ad, and they wanted to put this ad in the New York Times. The New York Times said they would not do it because the material was so offensive, so vulgar, so obscene, that they wouldn't put it in the New York Times unless they agreed to blur out the obscenities. The organization was bringing and was asking the New York Times if they could buy the time to publish Planned Parenthood's sex education material for kids as young as ten years old. New York Times said that's too obscene for adults. That was just this week.

This week we have been put in a unique situation for the first time in history. Our standing president called an organization, an organization that specializes in taking the lives of the unborn, he called them to support them and then in the end, he asked God's blessing on Planned Parenthood. This is all in the same week. And the next day, our president, President Obama called a person whose claim to fame was that he now has come out of the closet as an athlete who is homosexual, and so our standing president called to congratulate him for his bravery and his honesty, and not just our

standing president but our former president, President Clinton also felt the need, felt compelled to call up this person and congratulate him for his bravery. This, folks, is the new normal. This is the way it is. You see, the primary goal of God in our sanctification is to shape and mold us into the very image of Jesus Christ, and this is where the battle is going to take place.

Romans 8:28 says this: *We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: Those who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, so that he would be the first born among many brothers.* You see where that war is shaping up to be? Here's where it is. To the extent that you live your life seeking to be conformed to the image of his Son will be the measure by which you will be treated by the world, exactly the way he was.

As the elders come forward to distribute the cup, let us once again begin to consider Jesus. Consider how quickly the cost of following Jesus has begun to increase. I want to give you yet another example as the elements are being passed out. Many of you have no doubt heard of an organization that recently met with high officials of the Pentagon, and they met with them in order to give their perspective on Christians sharing the gospel in the military. There was an article about that written from Focus on the Family, it was in Citizen Link, and the article was entitled

"Secular Crusader Advises Pentagon: Christians are Monsters."

He's not kidding. The article was written by Bruce Hausknecht, and he explains it this way. He says:

Actually, Michael "Mikey" Weinstein, the founder of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation uses some form of the word "monster" to describe Christians twelve times in this diatribe. Now to be fair, Weinstein is only talking about "fundamentalist Christian monsters," whoever those are. But since he mentions Focus on the Family's founder, Dr. James Dobson, then that pretty much brings all evangelicals within the "monstrous" realm of Mikey's imagination.

He said, Weinstein doesn't take kindly to chaplains talking about Jesus Christ to the military personnel who seek spiritual advice from them, and then he quotes Mikey Weinstein saying this:

"If these fundamentalist Christian monsters of human degradation marginalization, humiliation and tyranny cannot broker or barter your acceptance of their putrid theology, then they crave for your universal silence in the face of their rapacious reign of theocratic terror. Indeed, they ceaselessly lust, ache, and pine for you to do absolutely nothing to thwart their oppression. Comply, my friends, and you, too, become as monstrously savage as

they are. I beg you, do not feed these hideous monsters with your stoic lethargy, callousness and neutrality. Do not lubricate the path of their racism, bigotry, and prejudice. Doing so threatens the national security of our beautiful nation."

He also says that sharing Christ with those in the armed forces amount to "spiritual rape," "sedition," "treason," and "a national security threat."

The article concludes by saying: C'mon, Mikey, tell us what you really think.

Let me tell you what Jesus thinks. It's Luke 6:22: "*Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man.*" I wish I could say this is just a bizarre aberration of a very sick mind, but this is a man who has the pentagon's ear. He's actually done us the service of stating quite clearly what lies inside the hearts that are captured by this world, and understand, deep within every single one of us that are outside the grace of God is the same spiritual pathology that results in a hatred of the only one who can save us. What is unique about this hatred is that it's a hatred that flat out refuses to identify itself. And it sees you and I as crazy for even acknowledging it. Again, I go back to John

7:19, we're repeating what the crowd said, "You have a demon! Who wants to kill you?" We do. That's it who.

So Jesus gives us our marching orders. We are to pray for Mikey Weinstein and all of the other Mikey Weinstains that are out there. We are to trust that the love of Christ is far greater than the hatred of man, and we are to ask God's Holy Spirit to give us the ability to live our lives so that our greatest offense is Jesus Christ and him only.

Just take a moment and consider 1 Corinthians, Chapter 11, the 25th verse says this: *In the same manner he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."* Take and drink.

This is the part of the service that I call head, heart, and feet. This is where we try to give feet to the practical understanding of what it means to remember Jesus Christ, and one of the things that I want to talk about a little bit just for a moment or so is three ways that we can respond to our culture. Those three ways are prayer, action, and fellowship. And let me just explain first by giving an example, yet another example. How many here know who Chris Broussard is? If you do, just raise your hand. Okay. There's not a lot of folks here who do. Chris Broussard is an ESPN

analyst, he's a sports writer. He's well known. He -- I did not know this, he is also a Christian. He was asked in an interview about this NBA basketball player who came out of the closet as a homosexual. He was asked what he thought about that, and I'm going to read to you what Chris Broussard said. He said, "I am a Christian. I don't agree with homosexuality. I think it's a sin, as I think all sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman is. Personally, I don't believe that you can live an openly homosexual life-style or openly practice premarital sex between heterosexuals. If you're openly living that type of life-style, then the Bible says you know them by their fruits, it says that's a sin. If you're openly living in unrepentant sin, whatever it may be, not just homosexuality, adultery, fornication, premarital sex between heterosexuals, whatever it may, I believe that's walking in open rebellion to God and to Jesus Christ. I would not characterize that person as a Christian, because I do not think the Bible would characterize them as a Christian."

You couldn't get a pastor to do a better job than this. This is an ESPN sports analyst. This is a guy who talks about sports. It was thoughtful, it was compassionate, it was accurate, biblically and every other way. So far two different major groups have launched petition drives to have this man fired for what he said. One of them is a Christian organization, a community which calls itself

faithfulamerica.org is calling to ESPN to suspend Broussard for turning "Christian faith into a weapon of anti gay hatred." And it has created a petition called "Tell ESPN Don't Use the Bible to Bash Gay Athletes." When I looked last, it had 22,000 signatures. The other organization is Moveon.org which most of you already know, they've already got 60,000 signatures on their petition.

So by way of example, what I'm saying is the first thing that we need to do is pray for Chris Broussard. He's a brother of ours, he stepped out, he's a pioneer, and there are arrows sticking out of him like you wouldn't believe. So we need to pray for Chris Broussard. The next thing we need to do is we need to do, we need to act, we need to do something. I joined ESPN -- I didn't know you had to join ESPN but I wanted to write them a letter telling them how much I have appreciated Broussard, so you have to join ESPN, I have joined ESPN, I wrote them a letter, I just want to tell you I'm 100 percent behind Chris Broussard. I want to see what your commitment to tolerance really is. That took what, two minutes? I mean, it's nothing. But as the world begins to close in on us, if we don't start supporting one another, we're going to be lost.

You know, I remember years ago the description that I had heard of -- and basically what it talks about is the light of the gospel,

and the light of the gospel is like a campfire, and the campfire is burning very brightly at some times and at some times it's at a low ebb, and when it's burning very, very brightly, you don't see anything out in the darkness, but as it starts to get lower and lower and lower and the light begins to you get duller and dimmer, you start vaguely at first to see glowing red eyes in the darkness, and as that light gets lower and lower, those eyes get bigger and bigger and more and more bold and they start coming forward, and that's what we're seeing right now. The eyes are getting bolder. The darkness is coming. So how do we respond? First we pray; second we act; and thirdly, I just want to talk for a moment about fellowship, and I want to talk about fellowship as a verb, not a noun. Fellowship is something that we need to actively work at getting. We need to actively develop relationships within this church, because these are the folks who are going to have your back. At some point we're all going to be in a position where people are going to say what side are you on? Are you with the haters or are you with us? And you're going to have to make those decisions at some point, and it really helps to have people who have your back, but if they don't know you, if they don't know your circumstance, then they're not going to be able to do that.

I just want to congratulate, I want to thank Melissa Mahr for what she's doing with Friends at Grace. She's trying to stimulate the

relationships between folks in this church so that we start to know each other better, and I don't want you to panic, I'm not saying that, you know, the Philistines are at the gate. They're down the street. They're not at the gate but -- and so what we do, we either fold up our tents and go home? Or do we get active, do we start to pray, do we start to act, do we start to develop the fellowship that we need among one another so that we can push back against the darkness with the grace and the power that we have, and we all know in the end, we win. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for your gospel, I thank you for your light, I thank you that you are a God willing to come into a circumstance and a situation and a place at this festival where you know the people there hated you, you know they had murderous intent, you know that if they could, they would have killed you right there on the spot, and it didn't stop you from ministering truth to them. Father, we're in a congregation, we're in a period of time at this point where this culture hates you, and it's bolder in being able to say what it hates, it won't say it hates Jesus directly. It will say it hates everything that Jesus stands for. And so I pray that you would give us the ability, number one, to be people of prayer, I thank you for the amount of folks that are coming out on Wednesday, it's just an enormous blessing to see people see this as a serious thing, that we need the wisdom that God gives, and he

gives it when we pray. I pray that we would become people of action, something as simple as just writing a letter to support brother Chris Broussard. I just pray that we would take action and I pray that we would start to work at developing the relationships among Christians so that we can strengthen each other especially as the time approaches, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.