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

**May 8, 2022**

**Communion Sunday**

**Mark 8:35-36**

**Prayer:** *Father, I just again, I thank you for your grace, I thank you for your goodness, I thank you for the old rugged cross, Lord. Again, this is the day that we focus on you and that cross and what you've done for us through the cross. And so I pray that you would give us an extra measure of grace, I pray that you would give us the presence of your Holy Spirit and I pray that this would be of lasting value; and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, this is the day that we remember Jesus and his cross. It's a week late but nonetheless this is the day that we think of Jesus. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with the disciples to celebrate a Passover supper. It's found in *Matthew 26* which says this: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this*

*fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* So 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 drink the cup so that they might symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to repeat the remembrance of his sacrifice on a regular basis, and that's 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, asking God's Holy Spirit to point out those areas where he's convicting us of sin, by confessing our sins and by participating in the elements. Jesus said in *John 6:53*: *"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."*

And we're following the life of Christ, we're following that in the gospel of Mark, and if you remember last time out we looked at Jesus' rebuke of Peter. Jesus had just begun to explain to the disciples the particulars of his upcoming crucifixion. It says in *Mark 8*: *And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.* And Peter famously objects. Jesus uses this circumstance as a teaching moment not just for the disciples but he gathers the entire crowd

together. It says: *And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."*

So Peter hears Jesus describe the three things necessary to become one of his followers: Let him deny himself, let him take up his cross and follow me. And so Jesus goes on to say: *"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."*

I want to focus on that last verse, verse 48 this morning to kind of understand what does it mean to be ashamed of Christ and his words, and what that implies for when he returns. So I want to ask this question this morning: Have you ever been ashamed of Jesus? Now if you have been, understand you're in very, very good company. Peter was actually worse than ashamed of Jesus. He was so terrified of any association with him that he denied with cursing even knowing him. What's worse is that the incident took place precisely as Jesus said it would when Peter insisted that all the

other disciples, they may desert you, Jesus, but not me. That won't happen. Jesus had just completed partaking in the last supper that we just read about and then he told them flat out that they would all desert him. This is what he says, it says: *Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same.*

Now it's one thing to be ashamed of Jesus and his words, it's another thing entirely to be so terrified of your association with Jesus and his words that even after insisting he would never do this, Peter denies Jesus. But then he has the excruciating experience of knowing that the Jesus he's just denied is witness to it all. This is Luke's account. It says: *Then they seized him -- that's Jesus -- Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a*

*servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.*

I mean, just put yourself in Peter's shoes here for a second. It's only a matter of hours before and you're bragging about how loyal you would be and now you've seen your Lord and Savior beaten and abused and abandoned and in the midst of it while you are denying with curses that you even know him, you hear a rooster crow and your eyes and Jesus' eyes lock. I cannot imagine a more devastating situation than that. I mean I can't imagine how cut to the core Peter must have been. Peter messed up big time; about the biggest mess-up you could ever possibly make. But we know what God says about sins, what he says about big sins and little sins. He says in 1 John: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to*

*forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

And we know that Peter agreed with God which is what confession actually is and we know that God is always willing to forgive once we've decided to repent, and we know from scripture that Jesus was quite willing to forgive even that level of cowardice and abandonment. And so Jesus' response to Peter is one of complete acceptance of his repentance.

After Jesus rose from the dead he approached Peter by cooking breakfast for the disciples who were out fishing because they had been so traumatized by the events that had taken place. And after breakfast Jesus spares Peter the agony of revisiting the details of the denial they both knew had taken place. Jesus simply asks Peter three times if he loved him. And when Peter says, "Yes," Jesus replies with a simple request that he feed his lambs. This is in *John 21*. It says: *He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."*

So again we ask the question: Have you ever been ashamed of Jesus or his words? Now I sincerely doubt any of us have had a more profound denial of Christ than Peter did, yet we see that God is

quite willing to forgive our lapses of courage, provided that we, like Peter, are willing to repent. So I wonder what it is Jesus actually meant when he said in our text this morning in verse 38: *"For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."*

As you're looking at this text, the first thing that you realize is many, many commentators point out here that the chapter divisions are actually very confusing. And believe it or not, chapter divisions are not divinely inspired. These are things that were added afterwards. And sometimes even with the best of intentions, they obscure the truth rather than elucidate it. So the statement by Jesus really should be defined with the opening statements of chapter 9 in order for the whole statement to make sense. This is what it sounds like. Jesus says: *"For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."* And he said to them, *"Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."*

See, Jesus has reached a critical point in his ministry when the actual battle with Satan is about to begin. The conflicts over law

that he had with the Pharisees and the Sadducees, those clashes that almost resulted in violence as Jews picked up the stones to stone Jesus, those are typical of the initial clashes that break out prior to an actual war when one side is kind of testing the other. And in this case the kingdom of darkness was constantly testing Jesus and the kingdom of light and constantly encountering a far superior wisdom and power. Jesus has just completed that part of his ministry that involves the miracles and the crowds and the teaching and he's trying to bring the disciples to a place where they can grasp that he's here not just as a teacher or as a leader but as the ultimate sacrifice for sins. And we know how hard it was for Jesus to communicate that to the disciples. And what Jesus was explaining to them was that from the very beginning, the kingdom is now starting to arrive in power.

See, Jesus alone has the benefit of the big, big picture, of knowing exactly where he sits astride history. I mean we're lucky if we can see forward to the end of the week; Jesus could see forward to the end of time itself, and he knows that the cross is looming even if the disciples, they don't have a clue at this point. He also knows that the cross is the beginning of the end for the enemy. And as we'll see in the very next verse is part of the kingdom arriving in power is going to take place in the next couple of days. This is the description of that from *Mark 9*. And

*after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean.*

Now at this point you've got to understand Jesus has already told them exactly what was going to take place. And once again his disciples, they show they have no idea whatsoever. And they're not about to question or ask him anything about what he said because they're afraid. They're not perceiving what they should have been by now been able to perceive that the cross was now imminent. We find out that after the transfiguration when Jesus is walking back down the mountain, he tells Peter, James, and John to say nothing

about this until he's risen from the dead. And the disciples that he's speaking to, they're looking at each other like he said something they've never heard before. Verse 10 says: *So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean.*

You know, have you ever found yourself in a situation where you know you don't know something you're supposed to know? You know, when your spouse looks directly at you and says, "Do you know what day today is?" Or when the cop stops you and he says, "You know how fast you were going?" Or maybe when your kids approach you and said, "Well, Dad, you remember what you promised?" Well Jesus has just told them to say nothing of what took place until he rises from the dead and they have no idea what he's talking about. They have no idea even though he's clearly and patiently explained to them over and over again. In fact a chapter before, in *Mark 8:31* it says: *And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.*

So the disciples, they're not about to question or ask anything about anything because they know they're supposed to know more about Jesus and his mission and they're clearly just drawing

blanks, and frankly so do we for pretty much the same reason. You see, we're human beings with human brains and we're trying to grasp something that is so enormous, so beyond human comprehension that we just can't take it in. I mean God has not only entered into human flesh but he's now successfully lived a perfect human life, and that human life is about to come to an end. The disciples up on that mountain, they're witness to the final briefing between the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the patriarchs. And it's all prior to the final battle taking place at the cross. And they realize, or at least Jesus knows that at the age of 33 Jesus is about to offer his life up on the cross. I mean the God who created the universe is now set to have the creatures that he created out of nothing who have rebelled and who now hate his presence, God is going to allow those very creatures to offer him up in order to pay the sin debt of the sheep that he's rescuing. They're going to beat him, they're going to mock him, they're going to flog him, strip him and crucify him thinking he's a rebel nobody who needs to be taught a lesson. The Roman soldiers think they're just conducting a routine execution, unaware that they are participating in the greatest battle in the history of the universe. They have no idea that they are mere pawns assisting in the battle that's actually between Jesus and Satan. These disciples, they're the very first fruit of the sheep that he's rescued and who have continued to share a story that we call the

gospel for some 2,000 years now until this very day. And today that's our job, that's our role. And some of us are like Paul who said in *Romans 1*: *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.* Some of us are like Peter who sinned with an oath, *"I don't know this man."* And most of us lie somewhere in between. And the differences between the shame of a cowardly act and the eternal shame of rejecting the gospel are not based on some momentary decision, but they're rather based on your understanding of whether the gospel itself is shameful or glorious. Again *Mark 8*: *"For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."*

And so we ask, am I ashamed to identify as a sinner, someone who is hopelessly lost and incapable of saving myself no matter how hard I try? You know, Jesus in his word said: *"I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."* So I ask, am I ashamed to admit that I am a sinner saved by grace and grace alone? *Ephesians 2* says: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* Am I ashamed to admit that I routinely violate God's standard, the ten commandments and fail at

his command to love the brethren? Am I ashamed to proclaim Christ and him crucified to my friends and my neighbors?

And so our task this morning is to ask ourselves, am I ashamed of the gospel? And as we prepare, we read *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.*

And I repeat this every month, I say communion is extremely serious undertaking and to enter into communion in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster. And so I beg of you, I say if you're not absolutely confident that you're a child of God, if you haven't by faith trusted in Christ as your Savior, or if you first need to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you bring the sacrifice of yourself to this altar, then don't participate, just pass the elements on. If you don't feel right about participating, err on the side of caution and get right with God first.

I always point out, you can also make the opposite mistake of

thinking that you have to be flawless in order to receive communion; and that, too, is a mistake the enemy loves. Because being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin and that you don't fail, it means that you recognize that the salvation you have is a gift that no one is capable of earning in any way. So I repeat this quote from Dane Ortlund every time. I hope by now it's stuck in your memory. He says, "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."

Also we need to understand that it means that when we fail, we understand that we are blessed to have a God within us who is convicting us. And so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive us as he said, and I've said already in *1 John*: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So that means that being a Christian doesn't mean you are the spotless ones, it means that you understand that as a sinner, you now have an advocate with the Father in heaven. *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.* And that right there explains it. We have Jesus' righteousness and not our own. It's a foreign righteousness but it belongs to us, and that's what gives us the

right to eat at his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Christ has purchased for you. As I said, he's lived the life that we were supposed to live and died the death we all deserved to die in our place so that we could be made worthy of just this procedure, taking part in communion.

And as we do this morning, I would just ask that you would ask God through his Holy Spirit to point out areas in our lives where we've actually been ashamed of the gospel. So just take a moment to think on that. *1 Corinthians 11:23* 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."* So take, and eat.

Jesus says if you're ashamed of me in the here and now, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in my glory. Then he makes a curious statement about some of the disciples. It says: *And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."*

Well Jesus knew what was about to take place on that mountaintop, but the disciples, they had no clue. The kingdom of God was about

to come with power and some of those disciples were going to be a witness to it. This transfiguration was the advanced preparation for the final battle that would take place at the cross and so what exactly took place while up on that mountaintop? Well again *Mark 9* says this, it says: *And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.*

Here's the question: How do you describe what appears to be the process of Jesus temporarily taking back some of the glory that he had emptied himself of in order to come to earth and live among us? You see, Jesus who lived among the disciples had drastically transformed himself from the greatest power in the universe to the son of a carpenter who had gathered together twelve other nobodies to take on the kingdom of darkness. The disciples themselves had no inkling of the extent of the previous glory that the Lord had enjoyed and just how much of his energy had gone in to diminishing that glory so he could coexist with creatures who had separated themselves from their creator by sin.

I mean God's original intent for man to rule creation with him was overtaken by Adam and Eve's decision to side with the serpent when he claimed that God was actually holding back from them something

they were entitled to, and that was to be like God himself, knowing good and evil. Well, in one sense the serpent was correct, I mean, they did learn all about good and evil by embracing the evil that Satan tempted them with. And having given up their perfection, they then passed that imperfection on by virtue of birth to every other offspring of Adam and Eve, including you and me. They created a situation in which the perfect creator could no longer fellowship with his imperfect creation. And a big part of the gospel is explaining that to people. It's telling people how our sin has separated us from God, but I don't think people understand the extent of that separation.

You go back to Moses out in the desert, he used to meet with God in a tent; they called it the tent of meeting. And Moses would bring the issues of the day before the Lord, all the things that were going on in the camp and he'd speak with him in a way reserved for very few people. *Exodus 33* says: *Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.* And so they had this incredibly close relationship, I mean, it says that when Moses died, the one who actually buried him was God. And so there's this incredible relationship between God and Moses but there's still this moral chasm that separated them. And it was a chasm that was so great that a full exposure of man with his creator would prove fatal. And we know that from these verses in *Exodus 33*. It says:

*Moses said, "Please show me your glory." And he -- that is God -- said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."*

So God says to his beloved intercessor who he meets with and talks with as a friend that if he, Moses, was to expose himself fully to who God really was, well the effect would be fatal, that it would kill him instantly. And so in fact God devises a plan where Moses is shielded from the full force of God's glory literally by sticking him into the cleft of a rock, but even then he can only see the back part of God's glory.

We love to think of God as the big man upstairs, but that's just our attempt to bring God down to our level. But just consider the Jews in the desert when God went and spoke to them, how they responded. They were terrified; they begged Moses, make it go away. Hebrews describes the God with whom we have to do by saying

this, it says: *For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.* And we know that Jesus Christ is the exact representation of God who voluntarily emptied himself of those things that would make it impossible for him to interact with us. Hebrews tells us: *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.* I mean just imagine being powerful enough to speak the universe into being and then imagine that being emptying himself of that power in order to take on human flesh. Just picture the amount of energy that had to be truncated, shrunken simply to allow the God of the universe to walk among human beings without annihilating them. Now imagine yourself a witness to just a little tiny bit of that power and radiance and glory being temporarily restored to Jesus while he's up on that mountaintop. The attempts of the disciples to describe it, you can tell they're limited by their understanding of how to describe a supernatural overwhelming radiance. You know, Mark describes Jesus' clothes becoming exceedingly white and radiant -- quote -- *"intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them."* And Matthew's account of the same things says: *And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.* And Luke says: *And as he was praying, the*

*appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.*

What they're all trying to describe is the three disciples have come as close as they dare to seeing the glorified Christ and had they seen the actually fully glorified Christ, in all likelihood they would have been burned to a crisp, they would have ended their lives right there on the mountaintop. And what they saw was the hint of the glory that Jesus possessed and gave up in order to come to earth. They got a tiny glimpse of Jesus in his natural state. Verse 4 says: *And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.* And here we have the two patriarchs who are long dead, who represent the law and the prophets and they're illustrating the fact that they're still very much alive in Christ and they're actively involved in this ongoing battle. Luke tells us the conversation centers around the upcoming crucifixion. It says: *And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.* Just picture Peter, James, and John, they're just human beings, they're just ordinary humans and they're observing a conversation between God and two of the patriarchs who have been long gone, and they're discussing with a glorified Christ whose face and figures are on fire, they're discussing this upcoming battle that's going to take place at the

cross. And so we next get this incredibly human response from Peter. Verse 5 says: *And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah."*

You know some folks when confronted with something completely beyond the scope of human experience would be shocked and traumatized into absolute silence. Others are going to just start babbling and that's Peter. He's literally babbling. He's so frightened, he's so terrified, he doesn't know what to say. And so he comes up with whatever is the first thought that his brain serves up to him. You know Mark says: *For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified.* You've got to understand also that Peter, James, and John were among Jesus' closest friends. John is the one who's referred to as *the disciple whom Jesus loved.* So consider that response to the presence of the living God and then try to imagine what it's going to be like for the world to respond. What's that going to be like? Quote -- *"when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels,"* when the world is on the complete other side of the equation, when they are on the side of the enemy of God and his kingdom.

Jesus came down that mountain still as the Lamb of God but he's coming tomorrow as the lion of the tribe of Judah. Verse 7 says:

*And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean.*

Well, the disciples kept the matter to themselves because they were ashamed of their ignorance, but we all know that that shame was temporary. Every one of the disciples save one, they went on to show that in no way were they ashamed of Christ and his words. But the challenge still remains for us today. *"For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."* And if our shame is temporary like it was with the disciples, we have the blessing of knowing that God is faithful and just, eager to forgive us of our sins. And make no mistake about it, refusing to share the good news for fear or for shame is sinful. You need to confess it, you need to repent of it which thankfully God is quite willing to undertake. If your shame though runs deeper, then it goes to the very idea of the cross and God's solution to sin, then you just may find yourself bearing the shame of the Son of God when he comes in the

glory of his Father with his holy angels.

So we ask ourselves that same question this morning: Am I ashamed of the gospel? Just take a moment to reflect on that. 1

*Corinthians 11:25 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.*

Well, this is the part that we call head, heart and feet, just again I have a very familiar plea at this time, it's something that all of us have unsaved loved ones, every one of us have friends and colleagues and people that we know, relatives that we know are not saved and perhaps we have sinned by not sharing. I've shared with you the times in my life when God has convicted me of that. There were times when God gave me an opportunity on the silver platter and I didn't take it, but I didn't take it because I was afraid and I remember days later confessing and asking God for another opportunity. He gave me that exact opportunity to share with that very person, and I'm grateful and thankful for that.

But I was also thinking as well, I had a conversation this week, just the other day with somebody who was a dear friend of mine. And it has to do with what I think is a lot of the fear that people

have of sharing the gospel, they say, well, I don't have a degree in theology. What am I going to say if somebody says, well, what do you believe? I want to just tell you about this conversation that I had and what I think was very helpful and hopeful in it.

My friend said that his son who we had been praying for for a long time, had a lot of issues, was far, far away from the Lord, had come back and was now fully excited about the gospel, fully excited about going to church and he had -- he was -- my friend was just overjoyed about it. And I said, "What did it?" He said, "You're not going to believe it," and he said, "we as a family sat down and watched *The Chosen*." And he said that just immediately did something incredible in my son's life because he saw an aspect of who Jesus was that he had never gotten before with an institutional idea of how the church goes about it.

And I was thinking about that, and I was thinking about again I want to show you a scene from *The Chosen*. I just want to set it up because they -- and you know *The Chosen*, it's fiction, they take artistic license. And there's a fictional scene in there about Nicodemus and Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene, as you recall, was demon-possessed. How well the authors take this fiction, they make Nicodemus as somebody who has gone and presented a means of trying to get the demons out of Mary Magdalene and it's a total failure.

He goes and he's still in his Pharisee role, and they tell him there's this crazy woman who's demon-possessed, you got to go help her. And he comes and tries to bring some scriptures to her and he's terrified of her and she finally throws him out and wants nothing to do with him. She's a total mess. And it's now a couple of weeks later and he meets her on the street and he has a conversation with her and he sees she's a completely different person. And so he has this conversation with her and I just wanted to illustrate the conversation, then I want to just say something about that after.

Sam, have you got that cued up? This is Nicodemus meeting with Mary Magdalene on the street. (video playing)

I just thought you can't get simpler, a gospel than that, I was one way, now I'm completely different and the difference is him. That's the gospel. Who can't say that? Who can't say -- I think every one of us who have come to know Christ should be able to say I was one way, now I'm another way and the difference is Him. I wish we had extensive theological knowledge, but if you don't, you can share that. You can share what Christ has done in your life.

And so that's my plea, my ask for this morning, that you would right now take a moment to just think of somebody in your family,

in your friends, your colleagues or someone who you know is not saved and ask God for the opportunity to just be able to say I was this, now I'm this, and the difference is Him. So just take a moment and then we'll pray.

*Father, I just thank you for who you are, I thank you for the difference that you have made in my life, for the difference you've made in the lives of every one of us who come to know you as Lord and Savior. And part of what you've chosen for us to do is to share that message, bring the good news to this world, and this world so often doesn't want to hear it. And so I pray that you would just touch each of us with an individual or group of people that we need to have the opportunity to share the gospel with, and that we would have the courage to realize we're just sharing our experience. I was one way, now I'm some way completely different and the difference is Him. I pray you would give us that opportunity and I pray you would give us that courage. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*