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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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James and John Make a Request

Mark 10:35-41

Prayer: *Father, again I just, I thank you and praise you for who you are, I thank you and praise you for the gift of your Son. I thank you for this time where we can remember what it is that you've given to us in that gift. And so we pray as we again reflect and as we receive communion that you would give us the presence of and the power of your Holy Spirit, that you would guide us, direct us, enable us to make this of permanent value, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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

drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

So Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood 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 he asked them to repeat this remembrance on a regular basis, and it's what we call "the Lord's table." And so when we do that we basically meditate on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, we examine ourselves, that means we ask God's Holy Spirit to point out areas where he's convicting us of sin and then we confess our sins and we participate then 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."*

And as you probably know, we're following the gospel of Mark. The point we're at right now Jesus has just had a confrontation with the rich young man and he's explaining to the disciples how impossible it is for man to make himself worthy of heaven. And he goes on to say in the course of that that wealth is in fact a hindrance rather than a blessing. And he says: *"Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to*

enter the kingdom of God."

All of this is a paradigm shift for the disciples, I mean, they have this extremely difficult time imagining that wealth is a hindrance because it's exactly the opposite of what they had been taught. It says: *And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."*

Well Peter then says one of the most regrettable things I'm sure he's ever said, he says, *"See, we have left everything and followed you."* Well, I pointed out last time that the everything that Peter left to follow Jesus was basically a failed career as a fisherman. And Jesus had pointed out left the glory of heaven itself where he was worshiped by all the creatures of heaven and acknowledged as fully worthy of that worship and that he entered the fallen world that we occupy no longer as ruler of the universe but now as the rumored illegitimate child of peasants. I noted that he came from heaven itself where he was esteemed and honored by all of heaven to the one planet that had rebelled against him to live a life of absolute rejection accurately described by Isaiah who said -- quote -- *"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."

Well Jesus experienced the most profound levels of poverty with regard to life itself and also with regard to his disciples who just couldn't grasp the enormity of his sacrifice. And yet he's still incredibly gracious to Peter here. It says: *Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."*

And again, I pointed out that fact was true figuratively and literally, I mean, the disciples would inherit a worldwide network of brothers and sisters with houses and resources that were theirs as well. Then Jesus gets brutally frank with his disciples. He says: *"See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."*

So Jesus knew all of the horror that was going to take place. He also knew that at the very worst moment of his life his disciples would all abandon him. Peter, the very one who was bragging about leaving everything, would deny him three times. So Jesus tells the disciples this truly awful news, and some of their reactions that we're going to be looking at this morning are literally breathtaking. It says: *Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask."*

Well, excuse me, James; pardon me, John -- again, this is the same John who wrote the book of Revelation -- but your Lord has just revealed to you something hideously unbelievable that he was about to undergo, and you decide this was a great time to make a personal request. I mean, a request that's put in such a juvenile and pandering way that Jesus can't even respond to it. I mean, little children saying, we want you to do for us whatever we ask. I mean, no one in their right mind would answer "yes" to a request like that because it's got no qualifiers. You know, we want you to make us kings of the world. We want you to make us the richest people on earth. We want you to be our magic genie who tells us whatever your wish is is my command, whatever your wish is my command.

Well, Jesus graciously corrects them. He says: *And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?"* Well it turns out their

unqualified request was unqualified because it was an outrageous request. It says: *They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."*

Now there's good news and there's bad news in this request. First the good news. The good news is that James and John showed a remarkable unshakeable faith. I mean Jesus has just told them that all of their notions of an earthly kingdom along with a triumphant reign over Rome, that's all not going to happen. He tells them Jesus is going to be condemned, delivered, mocked, spit on, flogged and killed but after three days rise. And yet without so much as a "Gee, that's too bad," they go right to their status once this new kingdom is launched. And so their faith, their faith is laudatory. Their selfishness, their lack of compassion, like I said, it's breathtaking. In fact it's so bad, it's so bad maybe they actually did have an excuse. Maybe, just maybe before the Holy Spirit opened their eyes, maybe they simply couldn't understand what Jesus was saying. I think that's a very real possibility. I mean, we know that three separate times Jesus got brutally frank with his disciples and all three times their response indicated they were clueless.

If you just go back to the last time that Jesus got real with his disciples about his crucifixion, remember what happened, Peter

rebukes him. He says: *"Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"* Well, we all know that that led to Jesus' famous rebuke of Peter, saying: *"Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."*

And so what happened here is that Peter was guilty of what we call selective hearing. You know, the rest of the disciples, they may not have stated it but that's how they operated as well. Every one of us, we also suffer from that same condition of selective hearing. You know, we hear but we don't hear. Sometimes our minds deceive us into believing how things are in spite of the overwhelming evidence that our eyes and ears are telling us. And it's not just spiritual things, it's really anything that we don't want to hear or see. I mean it's happened to me. I'll never forget the day I walked out of my apartment in San Francisco just to find out that my motorcycle had been stolen. I parked it right in front of the apartment. I distinctly remember the spot that I had parked it in and I just refused to believe it was no longer there. I mean, I looked at the spot, I looked at my apartment, I looked at the spot, looked at my apartment, and all the while my eyes are telling me there's nothing there, my brain is telling me well, maybe you misplaced it, which is kind of hard to do with a motorcycle. My brain just did not want to hear what my senses were telling it. But that was just a motorcycle. In the case of the

disciples, this was their Lord who had healed the sick, he had healed, he had fed the thousands, he had raised the dead and here he is telling them he's about to be executed in Jerusalem. And without the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit I can easily picture the disciples hearing but not hearing.

And you know that's also the way lots of folks hear the gospel today. You know, God loves you; check. Jesus loves you; check. God wants you to choose life over death, heaven over hell; check again. You need to repent of your sins, you need to make Jesus the Lord of your life and suddenly there's a loss of hearing.

And you know, even as believers we get tempted to only share those good news parts of the gospel that are easily heard and easily acknowledged: Jesus loves you. Who doesn't want to say just that? But just as the disciples needed the Holy Spirit to fully hear what Jesus was telling them, so too do our listeners need the Holy Spirit to truly understand the whole gospel including repenting, including making Jesus Lord of your life.

But here's the good news about the good news. It's that we are just the messengers. You see, it's the Holy Spirit who gives eyes to see and ears to hear. Our only task is to make the gospel as plain and as understandable as we possibly can. One simple way is

from Greg Gilbert's little book "What is the Gospel" is to remember four key words. That's God, man, Christ, response. God, man, Christ, response. That is to say there is a God who created all things and among those was man; man rebelled against God, he's now separated from God by sin; Christ is Jesus who is God come down to earth to live a life that we were supposed to live and then offered that life up as payment for our sins so that we would no longer be separated from God; and finally God calls all men to respond to his call, to repent, to follow Jesus as Lord of their life. And really that's all there is to it. God, man, Christ, response. That's the gospel. See, our job is only to deliver the message as accurately and persuasively as we can and to pray that the person has ears to hear because hearing, that is to say understanding only comes through the Holy Spirit.

In fact understanding was the problem the disciples had with Jesus over and over again and particularly with his use of parables. After Jesus gave the parable of the sower and the soils, the disciples complained, they complained nobody understands what you're saying. And they sure seemed to have a case, I mean, instead of plainly stating the gospel, Jesus chose to speak instead about wayside and rocky and thorny soils and what happens to the seeds that land on them. Understand, he gave that with no explanation whatsoever of what those soils stood for and then he

concluded the parable by saying, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."* I mean, Jesus wasn't speaking about natural hearing, he was speaking about the hearing that only God's spirit could give. And nobody understood better than Jesus how poorly his message was received. You know, to the people that were sitting there listening to Jesus it sounded like a strange lecture on farming. The disciples were flummoxed at Jesus's choice of words and at his seeming indifference to being understood.

This is what he said to him. They said: *"Why do You speak to them in parables?"* He answered and said to them, *"Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given."* And then Jesus goes on to describe righteous men of faith who in Old Testament times, they desperately wanted to know the very things that Jesus was revealing to them. He says: *"For assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."* I mean these folks lived and died knowing that God had a plan and that they didn't get to hear it in their lifetime. And Hebrews tells us: *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

Jesus then tells the disciples that they've been given what the strangers and pilgrims on earth desperately wanted and that is eyes to see and ears to hear. He says: *"But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear."* And only after he said that did he explain that the soils represented the state of souls of the unbelievers that we share the gospel with. But you know, that's the very same mystery that God has revealed to us and he's revealed it to us through the scripture. I mean, just think about that. We have the privilege that the righteous men of old desperately sought and could not find and we have it simply by picking up a Bible. Just like the disciples, we've been given supernatural eyes that see and ears that hear. Anyone can read the words of scripture but not everyone who reads can read with understanding. That understanding is a gift from God's Holy Spirit. He says: *"But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear."*

You know, the Peter who heard Jesus's awful words about his impending execution and reacting so poorly was the same kind of person that all of us were before God's Holy Spirit opened up our eyes. Peter couldn't yet see and hear with the same vision and hearing that we've been given. You know, the disciples heard the very same awful words that Jesus spoke of his impending execution and they too had that very same hearing problem. But James and

John, they go one better than Peter. They decide now's a good time to pull a fast one on the other disciples.

They said to him, *"Grant us that we may sit, one on your right hand and the other on your left, in your glory."* There's no other way to describe this than as a naked power play. Understand, this incensed the other disciples. We know that because verse 41 says: *And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.* And we also happen to know who was the driving force behind this whole power play, and it's not pretty.

Matthew's gospel tells us that James and John didn't really come up with this idea on their own; they had help from another source. It was their mother. Listen to Matthew's -- this is Matthew's gospel, *Matthew 20:21.* It says: *Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."*

So again, we have to give kudos for the commendable faith of James and John's mother, while at the same time noting their abysmal lack of compassion, their abysmal lack of understanding along with a willingness to try to out-flank the other disciples. I mean none

of it paints a pretty picture.

I mean as we take the bread, I want to tell you why I take great comfort in this passage of scripture. We spent the last eleven weeks in the book of Revelation and part of that time was focusing in on this massive worship service that takes place in heaven itself. There's this incredible vision of the throne of God and surrounding that throne is the 24 elders and right next to the throne of God is the position of highest honor next to God and that position is occupied by 24 former flesh and blood human beings just like you and me, twelve of whom were the original patriarchs and the other twelve was these very same human beings we're studying this morning acting extraordinarily human in this instance. So I look at these two men, I look at James and John and their mother acting in a petty, selfish and fundamentally dishonest way and I'm actually encouraged because I know how capable I am of actions that are petty and selfish and fundamentally dishonest. And what that means to me is that the grace of God along with the forgiveness of God will always be bigger than my sin.

So as you go to take the bread this morning, I want you to consider the grace of God in this conversation that Jesus is having with his disciples and count yourselves blessed to be among those who bask in the grace of him who in spite of our sin constantly offers his

grace, his power and wisdom.

I just want us to meditate as we're thinking about the mind of Christ and ask for the mind of Christ to consider the gifts of Christ. Also consider *1 Corinthians 11:28* which says: *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 warning every month, I tell us that communion is such a serious undertaking that to enter it in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster. And so I plead with you if you're not absolutely confident that you're a child of the King, if you haven't by faith trusted in Christ as your Savior, if you first need to be reconciled with your brother or sister before you bring your sacrifice -- what's your sacrifice? It's yourself -- before you bring the sacrifice of yourself to the altar, don't participate; just pass those elements on. If you don't feel right about participating, err on the side of caution and get right with God first.

But as I always say again, you can make the mistake of thinking on the opposite side that unless I'm spotlessly perfect I'm not worthy to receive communion, and that, too, is a mistake the enemy loves us to make. You see, being a child of the king doesn't mean you don't sin, it doesn't mean you don't fail, it means that we recognize the salvation we've been given is a gift that no one is ever capable of receiving simply by being good enough. And I repeat each month this quote from Dane Ortlund who 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."

And again, we understand that when we fail, we have a speaker in heaven, an advocate, we have an advocate who 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.* It also means that when we fail we are aware that we've sinned because we now have God's Holy Spirit within us; and so we grieve, we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us, a Father who said: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

And so the reason why we are here, the reason we are able to

participate in this service is not because we have our own righteousness, it's because we have Jesus's righteousness, an alien righteousness. It's not ours, it's his, but it's given to us by faith. So if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that he's purchased for you. As we've said, he lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so that we could be made worthy of heaven, so that we could participate right here and right now.

So as we participate, ask God for the ability to truly perceive and understand the depth of the gifts we've been given. *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.*

I want to pick up on this conversation that Jesus is having with his disciples. It says: *And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able."*

You know, those three words that James and John utter back to Jesus indicate that they still have a long, long way to go before they truly understand what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Their answer is so naive, it's so ridiculous on its face. And once again we just marvel at the graciousness of Jesus' response. Jesus asks them if they can handle the same type of baptism that he's going to be baptized with and they have no idea what that is. It's actually a very simple question: Do you think you have the resources, do you think you have the ability to handle being plunged under circumstances that are not only way far above you but are intended to harm you, in fact to kill you?

At this point the disciples, they know very little about their main adversary, they know very little about the devil and they only have this naive sense that they'd soon be entering a new political climate where Jesus be their king, they'd be his loyal subjects with all kinds of power and authority given to them. And they didn't just want authority, they wanted the highest authority next to Jesus. *"Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."*

Lord, if you don't mind, we want to be -- he wants to be vice president, we want to be secretary of state. And Jesus asks them if they're willing to handle what that's going to require, and they

respond with three little words, three little words that render so much work in the kingdom null and void. Those three little words are "we are able." I mean, so many churches, so many missions, so many works of God have been scuttled by those three words, "we are able." The fact is every time we make a claim like James and John did, we're actually denigrating the grace of God, denying him the glory that is his alone. You see, the glory of God is demonstrated by him being the source of our strength, by him being the source of our ability.

You know, God tells us in *Philippians 4:13*: *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* Well James and John at this point are quite willing to suggest to Jesus the first part of that verse without even acknowledging the second part, and that's what scuttles so many different Christian ministries. It's an attitude that says I can do all things not through Christ who strengthens me but by my own resources, my own power, my own insight, my own ability.

You know, the reason why we meet every Wednesday night to pray is because I know probably better than anybody else in this building the level of incompetence, selfishness and inability that is part and parcel of this church. I know that because I'm the pastor and I recognize all of those aspects in me. The point of coming

together for corporate prayer is to publicly acknowledge even if it's only to the few people who actually make it to that meeting that we don't have the natural resources to pull this off, that we're not like James and John who can't claim to be able to do anything outside of God himself without God empowering us to do it, and so we come together to pray. We come together to ask God for the strength, the grace, and the power to continue.

You know, folks see this church and they see that it operates more or less like a well-oiled machine. I mean, show up here on a Sunday morning, everything just kind of rolls forward and it's easy to think that human beings are the ones who are responsible for this but I can tell you with absolute certainty they're not. I can also tell you that if it wasn't for the women who launched this church with intensive prayer, people like Jean Warner, Helen Sorensen, Eleanor Machette, Bertha Moore, spending hours, hours praying for God to intervene and lift us up and enable us to go forward, I guarantee you this church would not be here. I guarantee it. "We are able" are three of the worst words you can possibly use in addressing God for the needs that this church sits right in the middle of. I mean if we neglect corporate prayer, in fact if we neglect individually praying for this church, we're essentially telling God we're able, we don't need you, we can do just fine on our own, thank you.

Nobody has captured how dangerous "we are able" is better than David Platt. This is what he said. He said: "Could it be the one of the greatest hindrances to the advancement of the gospel in the world today is not pagan idolatry and the sinful sexual immorality of the culture and cultures around the world? What if one of the greatest hindrances of the advancement of the gospel today is the attempt of the church of God, to do the work of God, apart from the power of the Spirit of God? We are part of a church culture that's created a whole host of means and methods for doing ministries that in the end require little if any help at all from the Holy Spirit. There's so much of what we do that we can go through the motions now without dependence on and desperation for the Spirit of God."

Now, you look at the other end of the spectrum and you find there's enormous freedom that comes from realizing that we're not able and that we don't have the resources, that we don't have the ability within us to accomplish anything that needs to be done to advance the kingdom, to advance the church, to advance the cause of Christ, but we have limitless resources when we rely on God who gives us strength. And it's so remarkably easy to flip back on human resources constantly because we know them, they're comfortable, we're aware of them. It's so very easy to take what God has given and the blessings that he's bestowed and somehow think that they come from some human source like my own cleverness or inventiveness

or drive or initiative. And the day that this church sees itself as the source of its energy that makes it go forward as opposed to pleading with God for his insight and his resources and his wisdom is the day this church is going to cease to operate. And believe me, it can go over for years and years afterwards, but just like lots and lots of churches before us, it will be a pale shell what it's supposed to be.

See, James and John said, "we are able" because they had no idea whatsoever of what lay in store for them. But Jesus did. So Jesus said to them: *So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared."*

Well, history tells us what happened to James and John, I mean James went on to become the very first bishop of Jerusalem. He was also thrown from the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem then stoned and finally he had his head bashed in with a club. John was said to be tortured with boiling oil and then exiled to the isle of Patmos where he wrote the book of Revelation. So Jesus is basically telling them that baptism by fire is a yes; sitting at his left and right hand is a no.

But God still had very big plans for James and John. And we've learned from the book of Revelation that actually James and John sat on thrones that surrounded the very throne of God not on the left or the right but certainly in this place of extraordinary honor. In fact, John himself sees himself among the 24 elders in *Revelation 4*. He says: *Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.*

Well, the white robes are symbols of the cleansing they received from the blood of Jesus because the Bible makes no attempt to hide the fact that all of us, including James and John, are sinners saved by grace. And this incident with them, their mother and Jesus may have represented the low point in their walk with the King but thank God by the blood of Jesus all of us have been rescued from our own individual low points. And the crowns they wear represent the authority they now have as co-rulers with Christ. It's a role that every one of Christ's own will have one day.

So also you take the cup, realize the privilege that you've been given. You know, we, too, are guilty of thinking those three little words, "we are able," whether we use them to claim as our own talents and skills that belong to God alone or simply tell God you're not wanted here, we don't need you at this point in our lives. So take a moment to confess your sin and rejoice that none of us can say we are able, but by the blood of Jesus we too will wear that white robe and that crown of gold.

1 Corinthians 11:25 says: In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." So take, and drink.

This is the part that we call heart, hands and feet, where we try to understand some kind of practical way of what it means to remember Jesus. And the most practical way I can speak of today is what happened on Friday. On Friday Steve Weingartner and I had the privilege of being with Leon during the last 24 hours that he was to spend on earth.

For those of you don't know, Leon was a vital part of this church for many, many years. He was a deacon, he served here for many, many years. He had a very rough patch, he had a stroke and could

not communicate verbally, had a very tough time understanding for, I don't know, seven years, six or seven years before he went to be with the Lord last -- just last week.

And so Steve and I were in that room, there was -- at one point there was twelve people in that room. He was surrounded by people who loved him, who cared for him. And I confess to a certain amount of envy looking at Leon knowing that his race is over, knowing that he's run it well. And I know there was some rough patches there but he clearly finished as one of God's own.

And I thought of this scripture in *2 Corinthians* which says: *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

You know, there's no doubt that Leon's -- quote -- "light and momentary troubles," they lasted for years. You know, after the stroke he was literally a prisoner inside his own head. I don't know what that's like. He could not communicate. And you know, every time we went to visit him, he would look at us and he'd see

us walk in the room, and he'd say, "no," like that. Of course you didn't know what that meant because sometimes "no" meant "yes" and "yes" meant "no" and but we'd have conversations with him, they were difficult conversations because it was hard to communicate, but virtually every time we said, "Can we pray with you," he just brightened right up, grabbed our hand and loved the fact that we would be able to pray with him.

And I would use one word, and somebody said, give me a description of Leon but you can only use one word. The one word that I would use is servant. That's what Leon was; that's what he did. And again, there's folks that you -- probably a lot of folks don't know, you don't know Rosie, you don't know Annie. Rosie was a member of our church for years and years, suffered from Huntington's chorea which again caused her to have mental issues at the very end of her life. She was unable to process things mentally. And, you know, Leon would go to her house frequently and she would see him and think he was some kind of thief or attacker and yell at him and cuss him out and he was just there to empty her garbage and make sure she was okay. He didn't care at all. And I know other people who, you know, they say one way to know if you have is a servant's heart as to see how you respond when somebody treats you like one. I know people who took advantage of Leon who treated him just like the hired hands and he didn't care at all.

Made no difference whatsoever to him.

I still remember coming to prayer meetings on Wednesdays, there's Leon buzzing around on the lawn mower annoying everybody and razzing everybody as they're coming into the church, that's the Leon that I remember. That is a servant.

And so what I would say that the practical part of what I'm trying to say now is in that room just on Friday I was just thinking this is what it comes down to for everybody. You're breathing your last breaths, there's nothing more. So whether you have a fine car, that fine house and a fine portfolio, all of those things that seem to matter, they mean nothing. It's just you and God, that's it. That's what it's going to be for every single one of us at the end.

And so I look at Leon, I said, you know, Leon, you and God, you had something there. It wasn't a portfolio, it wasn't a fine car and it wasn't all of that other stuff, it was the people that you served. So I thought, man, I want that for me. I want God to be able to say what I'm sure he said to Leon, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Let's pray.

Father, I just again thank you for who you are, I thank you for what you've given to us, I thank you for the cross and the fact

that you became a servant for us. You became a servant willing to die for us. And Lord, your expectation is that we would spend our lives serving the kingdom, serving you. I thank you for Leon and his servanthood, and I just pray that we'd all take a lesson from Leon and realize that what matters is your kingdom and what matters is serving that kingdom. And I pray this Jesus' name. Amen.