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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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The Biggitude of God's Glory

John 17

**Prayer:** *Father, once again we just thank you for the gift of communion, we thank you for what this day represents. We just pray as we are about to enter into a communion service that you would give us the grace and the wisdom and the presence of your Holy Spirit that we might again learn anew at some different depth of what it is you've done for us at the cross. I pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit and for the ability to make this of permanent value, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, once again it's the first Sunday of the month, and as we always do on each first Sunday of the month, we remember Jesus and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and he celebrated a Passover supper with them. Matthew 26 describes it. It 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."* 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 the remembrance of that sacrifice on a regular basis, and that's what we call the Lord's table and we here celebrate it once a month. Others may celebrate it once a week, some celebrate it once every six months, once a year, some do. We do it by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us at the cross, by also examining our conscience, asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, to point out areas where we have fallen short, by then confessing our sins and then by participating in the elements. *John 6:53* says: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Now we've been following the life of Jesus and we have thus far made it up to the 17th chapter. And if you remember, Jesus has spent the last three chapters preparing his disciples for his imminent departure. And he's having a discussion with them and now at the eve of his departure, he finishes up the discussion with the

disciples and then he shifts into a far more ominous gear. He begins looking back at his earthly ministry as he prays to his heavenly Father. This is *John 17:1*, it says: *When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you."* "The hour has come," says Jesus. This is an hour that has been literally thousands of years in the making. I mean ever since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, God has been patiently waiting for this very hour. On every other occasion even during Jesus's public ministry, whether it was the crowds who were trying to worship him or his enemies who were trying to kill him, Jesus was always aware of the timing and he was always pointing out that the timing was not right.

At the very beginning of Jesus's public ministry, his mother asked him to perform a miracle at the wedding feast at Cana. If you remember Jesus's response in *John 2:4* was: *"Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."* And when his family wanted him to reveal himself, it says: *Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here."* And when he offended the Pharisees, it says: *No one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.* Well, Jesus knows that this hour has now arrived. *"Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you."* The hour is the cross which Jesus knows is

now imminent and the goal Jesus makes abundantly clear is glory. I mean, we've talked many, many times about what this word "glory" means. Glory is God's character and his attributes on display. It is who God is and it's what God does.

This morning I would like to address three different types of glory, types that you will encounter in scripture that describe in some way who God is and what he does. There's God declarative glory, this is things that God does that of and by their very nature just shout out who he is and what he does. There's God's creative glory, things whose very existence are potent displays of God's attributes, of his power, of his might, of his creative ability; and then there's God's redemptive glory, which is God's display not so much of his attributes but of his character, which is going to be the subject of our message this morning. But first I want to look at God's attributes on display.

The first one is God's declarative glory. And if you want to see God's declarative glory, just wait until nighttime, step out on a starry night and look straight up. There you will see the heavens shouting out declaring God's glory. *Psalm 19* says: *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.* Now when David wrote that Psalm, the known observable universe was just what he could see on a starry night. I mean

there were no telescopes, there were no observatories, there were no Hubble spacecraft to peel back the layers that had been hidden for centuries. And we now know that those heavens that so moved David were literally billions and billions of times bigger and grander than David could have ever imagined. NPR recently featured an author who was commenting on whether or not there are as many stars in the sky as there are grains of sand on all of the beaches and all of the earth. NPR said this, describing science writer David Blatner who in his new book *Spectrums*, says:

"A group of researchers at the University of Hawaii, being well-versed in all things beachy, tried to calculate the number of grains of sand (on the earth). They said, if you assume a grain of sand has an average size and you calculate how many grains are in a teaspoon and then multiply by all the beaches and deserts in the world, the Earth has roughly (and we're speaking very roughly here)  $7.5 \times 10^{18}$  grains of sand, or seven quintillion, five hundred quadrillion grains. That's a lot of grains. Okay. So how about stars?" He says: "Well, to my amazement, it turns out that when you look up, even on a clear and starry night, you won't see very many stars." And this is exactly what the psalmist saw, he just went out and looked up. He says: "But we're not limiting ourselves to what an ordinary stargazer can see. Our stargazer gets a Hubble telescope and a calculator, so now we can count

distant galaxies, faint stars, red dwarfs, everything we've ever recorded in the sky, and boom! Now the population of stars jumps enormously to 70 thousand million, million, million stars in the observable universe (a 2003 estimate), so that we've got multiple stars for every grain of sand -- which means, sorry, grains, you are nowhere near as numerous as the stars."

See, apparently David was hopelessly underestimating the glory that the stars were actually declaring. In *Psalm 8* he says: *O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the Son of Man that you care for him?* See, when David saw God's glory above the heavens, he saw at most a million or so stars, maybe even less than that. But now that number we know has actually been multiplied by multiple billions because God is quite content to reveal to us only the tiniest fraction of his glory.

The same is true of God's glory when we go from the macro world to the micro world. *Proverbs 25* says: *It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.* Well, that very same article discusses the enormity of the number of stars and that it unintentionally makes the case as well for the

micro glory of God. David Blatner says, "The number of stars in the heavens is an unbelievably large number" but then very matter of factly, "He adds that you will find the same number of molecules in just ten drops of water. If you took ten drops of water, and counted the number of H<sub>2</sub>O molecules in those drops, you'd get a number equal to all of the stars in the universe." And so NPR concludes, he says: "So next time I look up at the sky at all those stars, I will be impressed, of course, by the great numbers that are out there. But I will remind myself that at the other end of the scale, in the nooks and crannies of the physical world, in the teeniest of places, there are equally vast numbers of teenier things. We are surrounded by a vastness, high and low, and either way, as Blatner's book says, we 'can't handle the biggitude.'" That's not a word. It's now a non word but it's a very expressive non word. See, our brains cannot comprehend the biggitude of God's glory on both the macro and the micro scale and yet for thousands and thousands of years, in fact for the vast majority of all of human history, God chose not even to reveal it. It wasn't until telescopes and microscopes arrived and became more and more sophisticated that we even discovered the scope of God's glory, and on both ends of the scale it leaves us breathless at our inability to even comprehend it. I mean in essence I think we can all agree that in all things having to do with God and his glory, the biggitude of God and its opposite, the smallitude of us, leaves us

capable of imagining only the tiniest fraction of God's declarative glory.

Now God's creative glory is another story altogether. *Psalm 148* says this: *Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word! Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! Beasts and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds! Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! Young men and maidens together, old men and children! Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven!* God says the entire living world gives glory to God in the same way that the heavens do. They also are expressions of who he is and what he does. And so much of that creative expression has now been co-opted by our culture which insists that God has nothing to do with all of creation because it all happened by blind random chance.

I mean I still consider naturalist materialist evolution as one of the most profound insults humanity can conjure up against the God of creation. And furthermore, I don't think God thinks lightly of that at all. *Romans 1:18* says this, it says: *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the*



truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Now remember now, if our definition of "glory" is the manifestation of God's character and attributes, then we have here God saying that he has plainly revealed profound aspects of who he is and what he does in what he created. "What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them." And it doesn't matter if it's a flower or a hummingbird or a whale or an oak tree, all of the stuff that is alive, I mean all of the stuff that surrounds us, they all shout out different aspects of God's creative glory. Consider for a minute how insulting it is for the crown of God's creation to refuse to grant him even the most rudimentary acknowledgment of his role in creation. I mean according to the vast majority of our enlightened 21st century culture, the new name that God has given -- or the new name of the new god that has given rise to virtually every living thing that we see around us from butterflies to orchids is "chance." Where did butterflies come from? Well, they came from chance. Where did orchids come from? Chance again. Or maybe, maybe mother nature. It's almost as if we are desperate to deny God the glory he is due even for the most basic aspects of his creation. I don't think it's just sin, I think it's great sin.

It is corporate pride at the highest order to deny God the glory he is due, and to insist that instead of God being the author of creation that random chance and an abundance of time has produced everything. God insists that this is not the case and that there are consequences for that belief. Again he says: *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

As the elders begin to distribute the bread, I would like us to take a moment to just consider the glory of the God who made us, who made the stars and the heaven, who made every living thing that we see. And as the communion is being distributed, I also would like to give us this warning about communion itself. This is from *1 Corinthians 11:28*. It 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.* You know, I say this all the time, I say communion is extremely serious business but if you listen to what the text is that I just read, God is talking about the ultimate sanction, the ultimate

punishment. He's talking about taking people's lives. You know, some of you are sick and some of you sleep. He's talking about taking the lives of people who receive communion in an unworthy manner. And so we say all the time to enter into communion in an unworthy manner as to literally court disaster, and I say if you are not absolutely confident that you are a child of the King, if you are not absolutely confident that you have by faith trusted in Christ as your Savior or if you first need to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you bring your sacrifice to the table, then when the elements come to you, just don't participate. Just pass them on. I say it all the time, no one's going to look at you or think you're strange or something's wrong with you. They may in fact think that you're wise. But also on the other hand, wherever the devil has, he has the opposite, he's got one error here, he's got the other error on the exact opposite end of the scale and that's thinking that I'm not worthy at all to receive communion, and unless I'm absolutely perfect, I'm unworthy. And we know that that, too, is a mistake as well. You see, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin and that you never fail. But it does mean some other things, and it means you understand that your salvation is a gift, and it's a gift that you've been given that you have no means whatsoever of earning.

And I repeat this quote from Dane Ortlund each month and it's well

worth repeating. He simply 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." You know, it also means that when we do fail, because we are believers, because we have the Spirit of God within us, we have the Holy Spirit convicting us of sin and so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father in heaven who longs to forgive and cleanse us. God says: *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 sinless, and it does mean that when we do sin, we understand we have an advocate, we have somebody speaking on our behalf in heaven itself. *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.* See, because we have not our righteousness, we have the alien righteousness of Jesus, that belongs to us, we have his righteousness and not our own and because we have that righteousness, we are free to eat from his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that he purchased for you. You know, he lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die so that he could purchase for us the ability to be made worthy of heaven. And so as you are meditating this morning, having confessed your sin, having sought God's Holy Spirit

conviction, I'd just like us to take a moment to direct our attention to the glory of God. Have I given God the glory that he is due?

1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter 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.

We're talking about God's words about glory. Our scripture this morning started out with these words in *John 17:1*: *When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you."* I've said it many times, God's glory is God's character and attributes on display; it's who he is and what he does. And we've been looking thus far at God's declarative and creative glory which are really aspects of his attributes, that's aspects of what he does. This morning I would like to turn to the redemptive display of God's glory. This is the point that focuses not so much on his attributes but on his character, and nowhere is that more self-evident than at the cross. I mean we've seen that, we can't but take in only the tiniest fraction of God's biggitude. We can only grasp the tiniest fraction of it in the macro world and

in the micro world, as well as his astounding creative glory when it comes to virtually every living thing that surrounds us. But Christ is going to reveal this morning in this high priestly prayer that those astounding attributes of God take a back seat to his greatest accomplishment, his highest glory, and that is by far the cross. And it, too, is something we can't even begin to grasp in terms of its enormity. There's simply no way to put this into perspective, I mean, it rivals comparison with all the grains of sand that are on the earth. You know, if really grasping all of the wonders of the cross were 7 quintillion 500 quadrillion grains of understanding, we would do well to gather a thimbleful of those in our entire life. That's how enormous the cross is. There's no biggitude big enough to contain it, and so words inevitably fail it. I mean why do you think people resort to psalms, hymns and spiritual songs?

And so Jesus, anticipating this event, prays, and he says this, he says: *"Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you*

*before the world existed. I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.*" We could easily spend the next year on this passage. Jesus is speaking here about glory. And here perhaps is the most astounding fact in all that Jesus is expressing. God's greatest accomplishment, if I could even call it that, is not speaking the universe into being, it's not creating all of the astounding life that we see all around us; no, God's greatest accomplishment is the ransom and the rescue of us. In verse 4 Jesus is praying to his Father about his goal and his mission and his first and foremost, glory. *"I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do,"* says Jesus. What was the work? What's the work that God gave Jesus to do to secure that glory? Well, Jesus tells us in verse 6. He says: *"I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word."* Do you realize what Jesus is saying here? Do you -- this is one of those things that the biggitude of it is going to constantly escape us. You can only kind of grab it and hold on to little pieces of it. But if you are a child of God, if you get the gospel, if Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, what he's saying is you bask in a privilege that is literally indescribable. You have been given to the Son as a gift from the Father. You have been chosen to be a central part of the drama

that is about to be played out in Jesus's life.

As the elders begin distributing the cup, I would like us to consider God's pursuit of his own redemptive glory. You see, in the beginning, God declared the universe into being, that's his declarative glory, and then he created all of the life that we see all around us, that's his creative glory; but then for reasons known only to God, he gave the crown of his creation the free will to go his own way. And when Adam and Eve chose to commit treason by siding with the serpent against their creator, it came as no surprise whatsoever to God. What it did was set in motion the greatest glory the universe could ever experience. I repeat myself endlessly but if you understand that God's glory is his character and his attributes on display, then you'd have to understand that this was a display like no other.

Jesus in his high priestly prayer makes this statement in verse 5, he says: *"And now Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed."* Jesus is reflecting back on the glory that he once possessed and it was way back before time existed, before the world even existed. It's a glory that the angels and the created universe reflected over the power and the might and the creative abilities that the second person of the trinity possessed. Well, Adam and Eve's horrendous



decision caused that second person of the trinity to empty himself of all of that glory, to enter into a peasant virgin, to become the very same Jesus who was now about to be crucified and is offering up this prayer. You see, the enormity of the distance between the height of the glory that the Son once had, a glory he had before the world was created and the depth to which he was willing to go to rescue us is the measure of the glory Jesus is now speaking of to his Father. Jesus is asking his Father for the strength, the grace, the peace, the power and the wisdom to pull off, if I can even use such an earthly term, something far, far greater than the creative and declarative glories that the Godhead has ever enjoyed. You see, everything that Jesus had in the glory that he had before the world existed, all of it was missing in one certain element. I mean, Christ had created the heavens and he had created the universe, he had created light itself and all of the mountains and all of the animals and all of the living things but up until this very moment, God had not yet fleshed out God's redemptive glory. He had not yet accomplished the ransom and rescue of the crown of his creative achievements, and that's us. This is precisely what Jesus is anticipating in his prayer. You have to understand, the entire universe is holding its breath at the audacity of what Jesus is about to accomplish. It's unfathomable to the universe that God's character would include a willingness to empty himself so much of his glory as to become one of us, as to live among us

perfectly and then offer that life up to his own sense of justice as ransom payment for sin.

You know there's a statement that Peter makes in 1 Peter that speaks about how all of us operate in a vacuum of sorts when it comes to the gospel. In fact, Paul says in *1 Corinthians* that we *see through a glass, darkly*. He's kind of referring to that same idea of biggitude. He says you only see a tiny fraction of what is actually taking place, and Peter makes reference to that when he's discussing how the prophets had no idea what the full scope of what it was they were proclaiming. This is what he says in *1 Peter 1:12*, it says: *It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

What Peter is saying here is that the prophets never fully realized that they were serving a much bigger picture than they could ever even encompass or take in. I mean Elijah and Isaiah and Jeremiah could've hardly begun to imagine that they were also serving Grace Fellowship on 25 Sullivan Avenue in Port Jervis, New York in the year 2017. It was way beyond the scope of their understanding. But so, too, is the gospel that we believe in. It is way, way bigger than we can even imagine.

At the end of *1 Peter 1:12*, it describes the gospel as "*things into which angels long to look.*" You know the English translation of that sentence hardly does it any justice. The Greek translation from the word "long" there is "epi thumea." It can also be translated as lust, because it's not just longing, it is an extreme longing. What God is saying is that the angels in heaven are transfixed by, obsessed with the gospel. The gospel that sends God himself, the God of all glory, who spoke the universe into being into a place where Roman soldiers now feel safe spitting in his face, to a place where religious leaders mock him as he's hanging naked and crucified, saying, "*He saved others; he cannot save himself.*" *He is the king of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the son of God.'*" See, this redemptive glory that Jesus is speaking of, this willingness to stoop so unbelievably low from such an inexpressible height, it so stuns the angels that they can't look away from it. And God again alludes to that incredible role that we have in all of this. I mean, we are not big players here. We are central to this entire thing not as heroes and not as victims but as broken, hopelessly lost bearers of God's own image that he's determined to rescue even at the cost of his own Son. And this little church here in Port Jervis has a role to play in his great redemption plan. You see, it is our task to speak over and over and over

again of the wonders that the angels never ceased to obsess over. It's our task to create a community here which sees the overwhelming wonder of the glory and loveliness of Christ and what he was willing to do and reflects that glory back up into the heavens. God says in *Ephesians 3:10*: *So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.* You see, those rulers and authorities in the heavenly places long to see the creatures that God rescued giving back to their creator the glory he so richly deserves. And we in turn reflect back to God by the way we live out our lives either the glory he so richly deserves or the indifference he most certainly doesn't deserve.

You know, if you get anything out of what I'm trying to express here today and I know how hard it is because I understand we do get one quadrillionth of what Christ has done for us, but understand one thing. Glory is what we are here for. And understand something else. Understand the entire universe is watching us. Angels are intently peering down into our world to try to fully grasp what it is their king has done not for them but for us. That alone should set the pace for virtually everything we do. And that's exactly what God says in *Hebrews 12*, he says: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and*

*let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

So my question for us this morning is how's your race going? You know, God says we are to lay aside every weight, every hindrance, every sin, everything that sticks to us like glue that takes us away from our primary purpose which is God's glory. I mean isn't the glory of God what we are about or is it life itself shunting us into a thousand other areas that amount to almost nothing or maybe even worse. God says to look to Jesus, *the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* You see, it was joy that enabled Christ to endure the cross. And the reason we are a central part of the greatest drama the universe has ever known, the reason why everything we do in our lives, whether it's as housewives or providers or students or friends or relatives, whatever, the reason we do what we do and the reason why it has such great significance is that we were the joy set before Christ. Jesus went to the cross with his eyes fully fixed on the ransom and rescue of us. That was the joy that was set before him. And Jesus' joy was being able to give his Father the ultimate joy, the redemptive glory of rescuing God's chosen

ones. Jesus says: *"Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you. I glorified you on earth having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled."*

See, it wasn't declarative glory that was missing from before the world existed and it wasn't creative glory. It was the redemptive glory that came from Jesus trading his life for ours. I mean do you realize the privilege that we have been given? I mean I can tell you right now you don't because you can't. Nobody can. There's too much biggitude in that privilege. It is far beyond your or my capacity to even grasp. The king of the universe emptied himself of everything, he was stripped naked and crucified, abandoned by his Father in order to purchase perfection for us. And what he asks of us is that we reflect back to him that privilege. And as you take the cup this morning, ask yourself that question: Does my life reflect back that privilege?

1 Corinthians the 11th chapter says: *In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."* So take and drink.

This is the part that we call heads, heart and feet, where we try to draw some kind of practical reality out of what it means to remember Christ. And I just want to -- I want to reflect on just last weekend I was having a conversation with my nephew as a matter of fact up in Canada, and he's not a believer. Actually we were sitting around, I was talking about the difference between creation and evolution and one point he said, "I can't believe you believe in this imaginary fairy God that just somebody up in the sky." And I said to him, I said, "Yeah, I believe -- what I believe you can officially call a fairy tale." I said, "But you believe in a fairy tale as well." And he said, "How so?" I said, "You believe in a big bang, right?" And he said, "Yeah." I said, "You believe that ultimate matter was compressed ultimately or whether or not energy was decaying and turning into matter and that at some point this infinitesimally small matter exploded, expanding constantly, giving us the universe we have, and people love to talk about what took place in the first ten-millionth of a second of the explosion, but tell me what happened five minutes beforehand. Where did that stuff come from?" "Well, it wasn't stuff, it was energy." "Okay.

Where did the energy come from? Just tell me where it came from." And so what I said to him, I said, "Look, I believe in an impenetrable mystery: In the beginning God. You believe in an impenetrable mystery: In the beginning stuff. We're both stuck with mysteries." And I said, "The reason why I call mine a fairy tale is because it really does have to do with a good prince and a bad prince and a war in heaven and the bad prince being kicked out and landing on earth and trying his best to ruin earth and the good prince coming down and living among us and sacrificing his life as the greatest of all fairy tales. So in my mind," I said, "what's the difference between the fairy tale I believe in and the fairy tale you believe in?" He said, "Hmmm." He said, "Well, I hadn't thought of it that way." Here's my point. That's a victory. Just the -- I mean he didn't say, oh, let me say the sinner's prayer and get down on my knees, that didn't happen. But I want to talk this morning about something else, I want to talk a little bit about intentionality. I think one of the reasons why I had that conversation which was just a random conversation, he happened to walk into the middle of it, is because we have been praying for this person. On the way up we were praying for this person, while I was there I was praying for this person, the whole time I was there, I was praying for this person. And there's a scripture -- no, it's not a scripture, there's a cliché that I think applies here, and the cliché has to do with whether or not you pray for



people around you. The cliché is if you aim at nothing, you're going to hit it. If you have nobody that you're praying for, if there's nobody that you're intentional about saying, God, this is my neighbor, this is my friend, I run into this guy on the bowling team, this is the guy I play softball with, I want to pray for an opportunity to share the gospel with him. You may be saying that's exactly what I don't want because I'm terrified that I won't know what to say. Trust me, if God's going to give you the opportunity, he's going to give you the words. Whatever it is that you have to say, God can fix it if you break it. But my point is this, is there somebody that you're intentional about sharing the good news with? Because if there's nobody, then don't be surprised if -- well, there's nobody to share it with. And so what I want to ask us this morning is to call to mind, I do this frequently, but call to mind somebody, a friend, a relative, somebody that you've recently run into, somebody that you have opportunities to share the good news with and just ask God right now as I lead you in prayer.

*Father, I want to pray for our neighbors. I look out that door and I see a world that is completely lost, a world that is on its way to hell itself and doesn't even know it. And I think of the incredible privilege that we have, I just -- it's mind boggling, what we have been given. And Lord, the ultimate privilege is to be*

able to share that with somebody else. And so I pray for each and every person this morning as they come and conjure to mind those people that are in their lives, those friends, neighbors, relatives, co-workers, whomever, perhaps even better the enemy, the people that they can't stand, the person that they're struggling with, that you would give each of those people the grace and the ability to meet and discuss and talk and share the good news. Lord, we don't know what your intentions are but we know that our prayers are a vital part of that, and so I pray this morning that you would give each of us not just the ability to speak but the opportunity to speak, and I pray that we would be praying that as well. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.