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

**July 2, 2023**

**Communion Sunday - Authority**

**Selected Scriptures**

**Prayer:** *Father, I just want to thank you for your grace, I thank you for what this day represents, the ultimate gift that is the gift of your Son. So we pray this morning as we are reflecting on this gift that you would give us the grace, the insight and the ability to take from your word by your Holy Spirit's power something of permanent value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well as we've said, this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ, this is the day that we remember his cross. Jesus on the night before he died he had one final meeting with his disciples to celebrate the Passover supper. It's described in *Matthew 26* which 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 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 that remembrance of that sacrifice on a regular basis. It'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, by examining ourselves, that means asking God's Holy Spirit to point out areas where he's convicting us of sin, by then confessing our sins and 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."*

Well as you know, we're following the life of Christ in the gospel of Mark, and if you remember last time how we examined a statement that was made by Peter to Jesus after he has this confrontation with the rich young ruler. And I pointed out that it was possibly one of the dumbest things Peter has ever uttered, something that he surely looked on with regret.

If you remember, Jesus had just explained how difficult it was for

people of wealth, that is people like us, people here in America how difficult it is for people like us to get into heaven, not because wealth itself is evil but because wealth tends to make people reliant on their own resources instead of turning to God. Well the disciples were astounded, I mean, they thought wealth was an indication of God's blessing, when Jesus said to them:

*"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"* they wondered, well if the wealthy aren't blessed of God then who could possibly be saved? Jesus told them, he said: *"With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."* Then Peter says that regrettable thing that I'm sure he regretted, he said: *"See, we have left everything and followed you."* And I pointed out last time the everything that Peter had left to follow Jesus was basically a failed career as a fisherman.

Jesus I pointed out he left the glory of heaven itself where he was worshiped by all the creatures of heaven and acknowledged as fully worthy of that worship, that he had entered into this fallen world that we occupy no longer as the ruler of the universe but now as the rumored illegitimate child of peasants. And I noted that he came from heaven itself where he was esteemed, where he was honored by all of heaven to the one planet that had rebelled against him.

And he came to live a life of absolute rejection accurately described by Isaiah who said: *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.*

So Jesus experienced the most profound levels of poverty with regard to life itself and with regard to his disciples who just could not grasp the enormity of his sacrifice and yet he's still incredibly gracious to Peter. This is what he says, he says:

*"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."*

And again I pointed out Jesus was figuratively and literally correct. I mean, now every single other brother and sister was his brother and sister and every other resource they had was his to enjoy as well. But then Jesus hits them with the bad news. He says: *"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And*

*the third day He will rise again."*

This is basically where we were last time. Jesus is continuing to instruct his disciples but the fact is he's speaking largely to blind eyes and to deaf ears. The disciples at this point they're still completely misunderstanding what Jesus and his kingdom are all about. It turns out they really had no choice but to misunderstand Jesus because God was actually at that point preventing them from understanding what was going on. Luke's account of the very same event gives us this piece of information. It says: *But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.*

So Jesus is speaking the truth to his disciples knowing full well that only after his Holy Spirit had been given them after he ascended into heaven would then all of the dots line up and the words begin to make absolute sense. So not only do the disciples not get Jesus at all but James and John decide that now is the perfect time to risk the relationship that he has with the other disciples in order to secure some type of future advantage over all of them. And so inspired by their mother they attempt to pull a power move on their fellow disciples, one that would guarantee their premiere position when Jesus's new kingdom arrived. So they

gather around Jesus and *They said to Him, "Grant us" -- this is James and John, they say: "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."*

Now of course this does not go unnoticed by the rest of the disciples. *Mark 10:41 says: And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

Well Jesus is telling them as well as us something they already know all too well. He's explaining how power and authority actually work, I mean, he starts off by describing how secular systems work. He says the gentile rulers Lord it over those they have authority over. Well that hasn't changed in 2,000 years. Those who have power and authority over others also have a great temptation to use that power for themselves. I mean from working at McDonald's all the way up to the White House, everyone knows how this works. *"Rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their*

*great ones exercise authority over them."*

You know some of us have had good bosses, others have had lousy bosses, some of them had truly awful ones but they all seem to have one thing in common. You know what was said by Lord Acton in 1887, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. And there's a reason why his words still resonate today and that's because all of us to some extent have experienced what that power does. And Jesus is telling the disciples as well as us the positive and negative aspects of just having and dealing with that power and he speaks both through the position of having it and from the position of being under it. Remember Jesus is speaking to people who have been repeatedly crushed by the power of Rome. Every one of them have experienced those in authority dominating those who were under them. But Jesus goes on to say that any and all authority comes from one source and one source only, and that's God.

Jesus made that clear at the very end of his life and as he's standing before Pilate who's trying to explain to Jesus that he has the authority to free him or to crucify him. It says: *Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above."* And we know Paul says in *Romans 13: Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have*

*been instituted by God.*

So if you have any authority over anyone in any position, secular or otherwise, it's only because God has put you in that position. And God will also demand an accounting for how you used that position. And if you have it, if you have authority, from McDonald's to the White House, Jesus wants you to know how to use that authority and what not to do with it. This is what he says, he says: *"You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you."*

So the standard top-down way we're all familiar with is not at all the way authority is undertaken for a child of God. Servant leadership is exactly what Jesus demonstrated, and servant leadership means putting others first. You know, last week we talked about that scripture, it says *"whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God"* and that includes being under authority or over it, and it applies to everyone.

You know, Jesus had but one goal and it undergirded everything that he did, his goal was to glorify his Father, and glorifying God simply meant putting on display God's character and his attributes. Jesus glorified God in the flesh by demonstrating God's character,

by demonstrating his love, his joy, his peace, his patience, his kindness, his goodness, his meekness, his gentleness, his self-control and Jesus did that all in the way he lived his life, but he also demonstrated God's attributes, those are the things that make God God. Notably he demonstrated his moral perfection. So Jesus says, do not lord over those who are under your authority and he also tells them this is how you do authority. He says: *"But whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

So Jesus is basically, he's instructing them on something every one of us needs to learn and that is how do I exercise authority? You know, you may be in the White House, you may be at McDonald's but you're quickly going to find there's always going to be somebody who is in authority over you and usually somebody in some way who is under your authority, and Jesus is showing us how that works.

Now as you go to take the bread this morning I want us to just be in a mindset of just asking God about this conversation that Jesus is having with his disciples, and I want us to consider this morning how you respond to authority, how you give it, how you receive it. So as we are about to partake of the bread I want us

to consider this morning from 1 Corinthians 11. 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.*

And I pointed this out every week how serious the undertaking of communion actually is. And again, to enter into communion in an unworthy manner, as I pointed out, is to literally court disaster. So I plead with you if you are not absolutely confident that you're a child of the king, if you haven't been faith placed your faith in Christ if you haven't or if you have a need to be reconciled to your brother and sister before you bring the sacrifice of yourself to the altar, then don't participate; just pass the elements on. You know, if you don't feel right about participating, err on the side of caution.

But on the other hand, we can make the mistake of thinking that you have to then be flawless in order to participate, that we are unworthy to receive communion unless we are spotless and sinless; and that, too, is a mistake. And I point out being a child of the

King doesn't mean you don't sin and it doesn't mean that you never fail. What it means is that you realize that salvation is a gift that no one has ever been capable of earning by being good. Each month I repeat the Dane Ortlund quote. It 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 it also means that when we fail, we are aware that we've failed because we have the presence of God's Holy Spirit within us, convicting us, and so with grief as children who know we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us, a Father who 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 doesn't mean that we are without sin, that we are flawless, it means that when we do sin, we understand we have a Father who longs to cleanse and forgive us, and we also have an advocate with the Father in heaven right here and right now someone speaking on our behalf. As *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 because we have Jesus's righteousness and not our own, we have this foreign alien righteousness that belonged to him and is given to us by faith, we are now free to eat from his table. So don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased

for you at the cost of his blood. He lived the life that we were supposed to live and he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so that we could be made worthy of heaven.

So as we participate in the bread, ask God this morning for the ability to truly understand and perceive the role of authority in our lives. *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.

So how does Jesus expect us to exercise authority? We'll go back to the scripture: *"But whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

Now I want to go back to this discussion that took place after Peter told Jesus that they had given up everything to follow him, not realizing even remotely what Jesus had given up to be with them that very day. You see, their whole understanding, their whole idea of the incarnation that is of God becoming flesh, that was lost on the disciples. I mean it's a concept that wouldn't even be

found until after Christ had ascended after the Holy Spirit had descended on them all giving them this understanding that they lacked right then and there. Jesus ended his discussion with the disciples by saying: *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

I want to focus on that term "Son of Man." That was a term that Jesus used frequently and it's a term that conveyed a great deal about who he was and what he had given up. You see, this was the second person of the trinity, the son of God who had consented to become a human being, to become literally a Son of Man. Daniel in the old testament refers to the Son of Man this way, he says: *"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."*

You see, Peter in his wildest dreams could never even begin to imagine who this Son of Man actually was. I mean this same Jesus that Peter bragged about giving up everything for was this self-identified Son of Man. And not only would he be given

dominion and glory and a kingdom that would never end but he would one day reclaim that which was rightfully belonging completely to him in the first place. I mean little did Peter realize that he was bragging to the Son of Man, the author of every single star in the sky, hundreds of trillions of them, most of them thousands of times bigger than our sun which he had previously long before spoken into existence. I mean the oceans, the mountains, the animals, even the crawling creatures, every single one of them spoken into being by the power that emanated from Jesus, the second person of the trinity, the Son of Man. This is what Colossians says. It says: *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

And we understand now, I mean this is the year of science, this is the generation of science and from macro to micro, the complexity of life has been unfolding for years and years and every single level reveals a creative power that belonged solely to Jesus that has been stolen and co-opted by naturalist evolutionists. These are folks who insist that all of this, everything you see outside that door was created by absolutely nothing, by non-directed random

chance occurrences. Now microevolution, absolutely, it's abundantly evident everywhere. All creatures have within their very gene pools all kinds of variations, lots of abilities to change to a changing environment. I mean just look at the genus canis which is dogs, I mean, it has enough variety to produce Great Danes and Chihuahuas. So do all of the creatures that the Son of Man created but only within species. Peter the fisherman, he probably never saw a great white shark or a blue whale or an orca, but Jesus did. In fact he fashioned them all by the power of his creative word.

I mean it's actually mind boggling to try to imagine what it is that Jesus gave up to become flesh like us. You might say well, that's all well and good but he only had to do it for 33 years, I mean after all, if he is as you say existed for all eternity then, well that's thousands or millions and maybe even billions of years, what's the big deal of having only 33 of those years being limited to being expressed in flesh. Well, what that ignores is that Jesus, the Son of Man, right now today some two thousand years after his incarnation still exists in the flesh. His commitment was an eternal commitment. He didn't make a 33-year visit to the flesh and then go back to this incorporeal state where he ruled everything. The Son of Man is now and forever will be the full expression of God in the flesh along with the scars in his hands

and his feet and his side. This is the one who is speaking to the disciples about servanthood. This is the one who was telling them that their instinct to become big shots was missing the mark by a long shot.

Jesus said: *"But whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant."* Jesus tells the disciples that they have to have a servant mentality. And in Jesus's case it was, do as I say and do as I do. *Philippians 2:5* says: *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

So Jesus's first act of servanthood consisted of emptying himself of all the glory and dominion and power that was his from eternity past in order to take the form of a servant which in this case was being made in the likeness of men. That's why becoming a Son of Man was his first and ultimate act of servanthood.

The second act of serving was becoming obedient. See, Hebrews tells us: *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what*

he suffered. You say, well, but doesn't becoming obedient and learning obedience imply at one point that he may have been disobedient? Well, not at all. What it really means is that God become flesh, the Son of Man actually had to go through the process of repeatedly and literally fleshing out his perfect obedience as an infant, as a toddler, as an adolescent, and as an adult. I mean he could have come into human flesh fully aware and cognizant of his role but then he wouldn't have been able to fully satisfy and identify the idea of him being our high priest. He wouldn't be able to fully identify with us as human beings.

So the God of the universe who spoke the universe into being became the Son of Man by starting out completely helpless, flat on his back, unable to move. He was at that point an infant born in a manger. The one who spoke the universe into being was now unable to speak in anything other than a coo or a babble. He was unable to fend for himself in any way, being fully and totally dependent on his stepmother Mary for his very life. That's what -- quote -- *taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men* involved.

We know that Jesus understood the concept of servanthood even as an adolescent. We know that because there was an incident that took place when he was a 12-year-old and it was an incident that points

this whole idea of servanthood was firmly embedded in Jesus's mind even then. Jesus' entire family was in Jerusalem for the Passover and afterward they went to return to Nazareth and they went in a caravan, that was a long group of people just spread out over a long period of time and distance. It's one of those classic situations where Joseph gets separated from Mary, Mary's separated from Jesus, and each of them think the other one has Jesus, and by the time they get together, they realize they've left without him. So in a panic they returned to Jerusalem, and they return only to find the 12-year-old Jesus in the temple and he's wowing the great teachers of Israel with the depth of his knowledge and understanding.

*Luke 2:45 says this: And when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. Now we can only imagine, it doesn't tell us what those question and answers might have been, but what we do know from Jesus' response is that at the age of 12 he understood the unique relationship he had with his Father and with his stepparents Mary and Joseph. He also know that the premiere teachers of Israel were all astounded and amazed at this 12-year-old. And so we go on in verse 48. It says: And when his parents*

*saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. You've got to understand, at age 12, 12, Jesus has an understanding of himself as Messiah, as the Son of Man who had come to take an flesh and grow into his full understanding of his role as God in the flesh.*

Well these next sentences describe how Jesus understood at that age at that level, how he fully understood servanthood. Verse 51 says: *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.* So here's Jesus at age 12 carefully and respectfully explaining to his stepparents the facts that he had to be about his real father's business which was in the temple. And yet, and yet in full submission, the King of the universe, the one who's realizing the extent of what had he given up to be human, he submits to his human parents and he goes back to a little backwater town called Nazareth to do carpentry with his father Joseph. You want to talk about being overqualified? And here's the King of the universe and he's coming into the full realization of who he is at age twelve and he's understanding that that role involves

servanthood on a level never before seen by man, and so he submits to Mary and Joseph when in all likelihood he could have been a religious sensation in Jerusalem. That's submission. That is servanthood to the max.

But Jesus didn't stop at servanthood; he ups the ante considerably with what he says next. He said: *"And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all."* Well "doulos" is the Greek word that's used here, it means bondservant, it means slave. It's someone who understands the nature of authority to be exactly the opposite of what the world expects and rewards.

Many commentators have pointed out here Jesus literally what he's doing is he's inverting the pyramid of authority. He's literally turning it upside down. You see the way authority works in most cultures is like a pyramid. The biggest of the big cheeses, he's the one at the very top and underneath him or her or all that he or she is in authority over. Pick any place you want in that pyramid and you're going to find there's a group of smaller people above you and a larger group of people underneath you. In politics you'll find the president at the very top and then you have the senators beneath them and underneath them is the house of representatives. That's all followed by a larger group and each group gets larger and larger all the way down to state senators and

representatives. In business you have the CEO at the top working all the way down to part time help at the bottom. This pyramid is the way it works in business, in law enforcement, in the military. That's how authority works.

Well, Jesus is challenging his followers to invert the pyramid, to turn it upside down so that the greatest authority is the one at the very bottom supporting in servanthood virtually everyone above him. And that doesn't mean that there's now an absence of authority and everyone just does what he wants, it means that all authority is exercised just like Paul said. Let me repeat what he said. He said: *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus -- have the same mind that he had -- who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

And again servant here, it's that word *doulos*, it means slave. And being a slave means you surrender your personal autonomy to your master. It's very different from a servant. A servant may have to perform many menial tasks but a servant still maintains his own autonomy. A slave is someone who has given that autonomy up to his

master, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. And what Jesus is telling his disciples there is that their autonomy actually belongs to him. The relationship of every single person of this inverted pyramid should be as slave to owner, as one who willingly surrenders his autonomy to the needs of the pyramid that he's now putting above him just like Jesus did. Each and everything that they do and the authority that they yield should be directly out of the mind of Christ as servant.

Again, I'm going to repeat what he said: *"But whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all."* And then Jesus adds: *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."* You see, Jesus' ultimate act of service was not the incarnation, it wasn't his public ministry as he gathered his disciples to pass on to them the way they should live so they could pass it on even up to us here today, Jesus' ultimate act of servanthood was the cross. Jesus didn't come to earth to be our model or to be a teacher or a great philosopher or leader, although he did all of those things perfectly, he came to be a sacrifice. And you know, that's an idea that's come under fire today.

The idea of penal substitution has come under assault of late.

This is the doctrine that simply states that the penalty which all of us deserve has been taken by someone else who substituted himself for us. Penal substitution simply states that Christ substituted himself for us, bearing the penalty we all justly deserved. Folks who are offended at the idea of God demanding a penalty in the first place say, well, if your God is all powerful then why can't he just let bygones be bygones and just welcome everyone into heaven? But a perfect God still has perfect attributes and among those attributes is justice itself which he has to exercise perfectly. And for a perfect God to turn his back and allow sinners to just kind of wander into heaven unopposed would be a god who rejected justice itself.

And again, probably the best example I can give of the bankruptcy of this position is the one given by theologian Miroslav Volf who was a victim of the war in Kosovo. His thesis is even more appropriate as more and more tales of war crimes and atrocities occur in the war between Russia and Ukraine. See, Volf suggests that only wealthy and safe protected people want a god who exercises no justice at all. And he says it's because they've never been impacted by injustice or violence. He goes on to say that only those who believe in a God who is willing to exercise divine vengeance, only those folks will be capable of non-violence themselves.

This is how he puts it. He says: "My thesis is that the practice of non-violence requires a belief in divine vengeance. My thesis will be unpopular with man in the West. But imagine speaking to people (as I have) whose cities and villages have been first plundered, then burned, and leveled to the ground, whose daughters and sisters have been raped, whose fathers and brothers have had their throats slit. Your point to them-we should not retaliate? Why not? I say-the only means of prohibiting violence by us is to insist that violence is only legitimate when it comes from God. Violence thrives today, secretly nourished by the belief that God refuses to take the sword. It takes the quiet of a suburb for the birth of the thesis that human nonviolence is a result of a God who refuses to judge. In a scorched land-soaked in the blood of the innocent, the idea will invariably die, like other pleasant captivities of the liberal mind."

You see, Jesus was the ultimate servant who practiced absolute non-violence for the exact same reason. He knew that his heavenly Father was the ultimate source of justice and that he would render it accordingly. So it all comes down to the big question. All right, how do we put this into practice? Well, we believe just like Jesus believed and we act just like he acted. And Peter expressed that perfectly. Listen to how Peter explains it to us. This is what he says. He says: *For to this you have been called,*

*because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*

So as we prepare to take the cup I want you to ask yourself these very same words: When you are reviled, when you suffer, when you are threatened, do you revile? Do you threaten in return or do you trust yourself to him who judges justly? Jesus said: *"Rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you."* And to the extent that we trust him who judges justly will be the extent that we practice servant leadership.

He goes on to say: *"But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* 1 Corinthians 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 the practical value of what it means to remember Jesus and his sacrifice. We've been talking about this inverted pyramid, this idea of servanthood and how incredibly important servanthood is in the kingdom. And I want to read to you from Acts 9 just a section of scripture about a person named Dorcas.

*It says: Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.*

So I just want to ask why, why was it that Dorcas was such a big

deal? I mean, did she do a bunch of really nifty seminars? Did she do all kinds of concerts? Maybe she was musically gifted. Was she a great teacher? Well, the scripture tells us why she was a big deal. It says she was full of good works and acts of charity. Well, what did she do? What did she do that was so impressive? Well, it tells us as well. It says, "*all the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them.*" So she was a big deal. What did she do? She made stuff. She made stuff for other people. How tempting it would be to think that all of the other parts of the church matters so much more than simply serving? But they don't. You see, without servants, the church can do nothing. We have some real servant hearts in this church, I'm not denying that at all; I happen to be married to one of them.

Last week I spoke about Mackay the cobbler. This is the guy who was saying -- this is way back in the 1800's -- he said on judgment day, he expects to see all of the shoes that he fixed lined up as testimony to the fact that whatever he did, he did it all to the glory of God. He wants Jesus to look at those shoes and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And I look at that, and I think of this man and I say, this guy gets it.

I want to be perfectly frank here. As a church, we sit, we pray,

oftentimes we think we have a very hard time getting folks to see that serving your church just like Dorcas did is a matter of supreme importance. It's more important than an awful lot of things folks think is more important. And so it's my prayer this morning that we grow in that knowledge and understanding and that at judgment day every one of us will be looking back at opportunities embraced or ignored, and my hope is that we have no regrets. Let's pray.

*Father, I thank you for your goodness, I thank you for your grace, I thank you for servants. I thank you for the servant that Dorcas was, and for the incredible affect that that had on that church. I pray for the servant hearts that are in our church, I pray that you would grow them, amplify them, give them the ability to encourage others in their servanthood because every single person in the church has a role and a place and a job and a task. I pray that we would see that as of supreme importance. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*