

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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I Have Not Come to Judge

John 12:46-48

Prayer: *Father, we do again thank you for the gift that we have of this church, the gift that we have of the freedom to worship you, we celebrate our independence, Lord, and again, we thank you that in you, we are free, freed not just from government tyranny but freed from sin, and that's far more important. Father, this morning as we again focus in on the cross of your Son, we just pray for the grace and the presence of your Holy Spirit. Draw us closer to you, draw us into your word, give us the power and the ability to understand it and make it a permanent part of our lives, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, once again it is the first Sunday of the month, the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and there for the last time he celebrated with them a Passover supper. Matthew 26 records it, it says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given*

thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of 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 his blood and then he asked his 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 remember that service, that sacrifice, on a regular basis, and we call that the Lord's table. We celebrate it once a month, and we do that by meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, we do it by examining ourselves, asking God's Holy Spirit to point out those areas in our life where he is convicting us of sin, we do it by 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."

Well, we've been following the life of Jesus and we've worked our way thus far to the end of the 12th chapter of the gospel of John. Jesus there is continuing to give a summation of his entire ministry, and this is what he says starting in verse 46. He says: *"I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does*

not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day." Well, here Jesus is addressing issues of light and darkness and of judgment, and he starts out by saying, if you believed in him you would no longer remain, remain in darkness. Now he says that because darkness is all that the world has ever known.

You know, if you were suddenly thrust into a cave, you would have a very tough time at first adjusting to the darkness. You'd probably grasp about for something solid to put your feet on and you would be struggling and striving somehow to see through the darkness and you might not be able to make out anything, it would be a real panic not being able to see your hands right in front of your face. But what if instead of being thrust into a cave, what if instead you were born there. What if in fact it is all that you have ever known? See, the darkness then would be your comfort, it would be your shield, it would be protecting you, so you would think, from harm. And what little exposure you might have to the light would be a source of great panic, a source of -- of great pain. Much like some of us would experience if in the middle of the night someone came up to us and shined a bright light right in our face. One thing for certain, you would certainly not appreciate the one

who was shining that light. Well, God says that is exactly where we are when it comes to our spiritual eyes. You see, spiritually speaking, all of us were in the deepest recesses of a moral cave when Christ came into our darkness. *Matthew 4:16* says: "*The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.*" You see, we all lived in darkness, and we reacted just like those who have always lived there at the light. We howl, and we howl not just at the light but at the one who is shining as well. God said in *John 3:19*: "*This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*"

Now at this point in Jesus's ministry, he's nearing the end of his life and he's speaking about the goals that he has met, what he has accomplished while he is here on earth, and he says in verse 46: "*I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.*" Now we've witnessed the fact that Jesus is dealing with the people who by and large loved that darkness, they loved to remain in that darkness, and Jesus is addressing them. That's who he's speaking to. He's explaining that he was here to save the world and not to judge it. Judgment would come, but it would come when Christ returned. But for now his role was to save and to heal the lost. Now that didn't mean

that the people that he was addressing had no judge, in fact he spoke to them of the judgment they had, and he explains who that judge is. He says this in verse 47, he says: *"If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day."* You have to listen to what Jesus is saying here. He's saying the one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; and that judge is the word that I have spoken. He says the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. And Jesus is saying the word of God stands today as our judge, and that it will be the final word on the final day. But it has much to say to us today.

I was speaking with someone the other day about this, the tragedy of the Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage, and I mentioned the fact that God is not mocked and that we as a country are going to pay a price for what we have done through our Supreme Court. And the person that I was speaking with said, well, I don't know, he said, in 1973 we passed *Rowe versus Wade* and there's been 53 million babies who have been slaughtered and so far I don't see any earthquakes or famine or pestilence. I said to him, I said, you don't understand. We are experiencing the wrath of God right now. This is what the wrath of God feels like. What we are in today,

the political, the philosophical, the moral, and the cultural climate that we are in right now is part of the outworking of the wrath of God. We're in the middle of a cultural earthquake and many of us don't even realize it. God is judging us and he's judging us the exact same way that he judged those in Romans 1. There God describes the outpouring of his wrath on mankind for their willing suppression of the truth. This is what he says. In *Romans 1:18* 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.* That's God's definition of what wrath is. You see, we think of wrath and we think of some kind of calamitous event, there's going to be earthquakes and famine and pestilence, but God is very clear about how his wrath is expressed. In fact, the whole second half of Romans 1 is devoted to the downward spiral that takes place in mankind as a result of God's wrath. People often think it's the cause of God's wrath; it's not the cause, it's the effect. The cause is the suppression of truth. The effect is the wrath of God. And that wrath of God can be seen in the downward spiral of mankind. If you look at Romans 1, you see three times God uses the description or the phrase "God gave them up." It occurs in *Romans 1:24*, it says: *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.* Then in verse 26 it says it again, it says: *For this reason God*

gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature. And then again in verse 28, it says: And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

What does it mean to be given up by God? Well, I think we can sum it up by saying two things occur. There are horrifying actions accompanied by great approval. See, what that is is God withdrawing his common grace from us. And what God is doing is he's leaving us to the worst possible tyrant we could ever imagine to rule over us, he is leaving us to ourselves. And to grasp the extent of it, first you have to understand what we mean by the term "common grace." You see, common grace is the grace that God extends to virtually everyone regardless of what they think about God, regardless of what they believe. In *Matthew 5:45* it says: *"He makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain*

on the just and on the unjust." So what God is saying is that every single breath that we breathe is a gift from God regardless of what you think of God. And we see many, many people who have nothing whatsoever and want nothing whatsoever to do with God enjoying God and this kingdom to an extraordinary length. Well, part of that is common grace. And another part of common grace is not just granting to everyone the same sun and moon and stars, oceans and beauty and all of those things that everybody enjoys, but it is also a godly restraint. It is a restraint put on the evil that men and women are capable of. You see, without God's common grace, we would devour each other. Life as we know it could not go on. I mean, we've all received hints of how that could be and we've seen that in certain countries at certain times where it seems as if God has removed his common grace and literally all hell has broken out. And we shudder to think of those times when God has removed his grace. I mean, we think of Germany in the 1940s, we think of China in the 1950s, we think of North Korea even today. I mean, know that these are places where monstrous things happen all of the time, and for reasons known only to God, God has given them up.

And so horrifying things happen but they don't just happen, horrifying things happen and they happen to great approval. That's the sign that God has given them up. I believe we're in the

process of having that happen in this country. I mean, it is uncanny how Romans 1 is mirroring precisely what is happening in our culture. I think it's because God is removing his common grace from us. And what he's doing is he's giving us up to our own insanity. And when that happens, the contrast between a life lived under the wisdom and restraint of God's word and the life lived outside of that wisdom becomes readily apparent. God says in *Proverbs 29: Without revelation, people run wild, but one who listens to instruction will be happy.* That revelation that Proverbs is speaking of is the word of God and we have turned away from that revelation, and in my opinion, people are clearly now running wild. Like I said, I believe we are under God's curse, and I believe he is giving us up, he's in the process of giving us up politically, philosophically, morally, and culturally. And I would suggest to you that the abundance for that -- that the evidence for that is abundant. Let me give you some.

First, let me just talk briefly about politics. Politically we have two parties in this country, one of which stands specifically for the advancement of abortion at any stage of a woman's pregnancy and for the dissolution of marriage as God has always declared it in *Genesis 2:24.* God says: *This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.* Now I've heard folks say, well, you know, that's Old Testament, you

know, Jesus had nothing to say about that. Well, sure he did. He had plenty to say. In *Matthew 19:3*, it says this: *Some Pharisees approached Him to test Him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on any grounds?" "Haven't you read," He replied, "that He who created them in the beginning made them male and female", and He also said: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, man must not separate."*

Again, this is my opinion, but I am thinking that God is in the process of giving us up politically. And the reason why I think that is that there are now myriads and myriads of evangelical Christians who have no problem whatsoever supporting a Democratic party that stands in absolute defiance towards God in two of the most important areas that there is: The area of marriage itself and life itself. You see, I see God in that as removing even the most basic commonsensical understanding of how the gospel is supposed to translate to our political lives. And what we see when we look at this is -- is horrible actions with great approval. That's a sign that God is giving us up. Now understand, I hold no brief whatsoever for Republicans. This is not a political statement. The brief that I hold is for God and for his word. And from what I can see, at least for now, the Republicans are not specifically shaking their fist in God's face. But if and when

they do -- and they just might -- I will abandon them as well.

Philosophically I think I can sum up the insanity that has gripped our culture by the words of the philosopher Peter Singer who was recently asked this in an interview. He was asked: "If you were standing in front of a burning house with two hundred pigs and one child inside, and you could choose to save either the animals or the child, what would you do?" He answered: "At a certain point, the animals' suffering becomes so great that one should choose to save the animals over the child. Whether this point occurs at 200 or two million animals, I don't know. But one cannot let an infinite number of animals burn to save the life of one child."

Yes, you can, Peter; yes, you can. The Christian Research Institute said this of Singer, said: "In Singer's criteria, killing a newborn (or fetus) is not the same as killing a person. In fact, some acts of infanticide are less problematic than killing a happy cat. If, for example, parents kill one disabled infant to make way for another baby that will be happier than the first, the total amount of happiness increases for all interested parties. Singer's logic can be summed up this way: Until a baby is capable of self-awareness, there is no controlling reason not to kill it to serve the preferences of the parents." Now there's something you need to understand here and that is this, that Peter Singer is not some isolated crackpot. He's a bioethicist at Princeton

University, he's the darling of the New York Times. He's one of the leading philosophers in this country. Now the fact that he is considered a person of some renown and not some sick societal outcast is even more reason to believe that God has given us up philosophically. You know why? What he's saying is horrifying, but what he is saying has great approval.

You know, morally we now live in bizarro world. You know, when I was a kid, one of my favorite comic books was Superman and one of my favorite sub characters in Superman was Bizarro man. I don't know if I'm dating myself, but those of you who are my age know what it's all about. He was Superman's opposite. Whenever Superman did, he did the opposite. The world that he lived in was this mirror image of Superman's world where good was evil and evil was good and light was darkness and darkness was light. Well, folks, welcome to bizarro world. Fiction has now become fact. I think it's safe to say that the words of Isaiah ring more true today than they have ever rung since the founding of our country. And this is what Isaiah said in *Isaiah 5:20*, he said: *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness, who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.*

Now, we're getting used to being astounded by what we see, but we

shouldn't be. Again, let me give you another appalling example. This is a headline from Live Action News. The headline is: "Woman asks for \$1 million or she will abort her seven-week old baby." Live Action News reports that this anonymous woman has stated on her website "On July 7th" -- that's two days from today -- "I will start accepting donations on this page. I will accept donations for 72 hours, the same amount of time this state currently requires a woman to wait after a consultation with a doctor until she can have an abortion. If \$1 million is raised in those 72 hours, then I'll have the baby, give it up for adoption and every cent of that \$1 million will be put in a trust fund for the child, which he or she will have access to when they turn 21. I'll keep none of the money for myself so that if I am to be vilified in this process, it can't be for that. If the \$1 million goal is not met by the end of those 72 hours, any and all donations received will be refunded and I will have the abortion that I have already scheduled for July 10th in my home state." The woman goes on to say why she's doing this, she says -- quote -- "The backward direction this country is headed in terms of its treatment of women I feel is due in large part to the influence of the religious right disguised as the pro-life movement. The pro-life movement cares very little about saving lives and far more about controlling women by minimizing their choices in a wide variety of ways not the least of which is readily available reproductive health care." This woman intends to

prove her point by killing her baby. Jesus said in *Matthew 24*:
Because lawlessness will multiply, the love of many will grow cold.
What she's saying is give me a million dollars or I'm going to kill
him. This is morally breathtaking, but you know, it's horrifying
and it's greatly approved.

We are seeing the effects of what I call judicial blindness. God
has removed from people the moral ability to see the horror that is
right in front of their eyes. *John 9:39* says: *Jesus said, "I came
into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see
will see and those who do see will become blind."* God is giving up
on us politically, philosophically and morally. And all of that
can be readily seen in the fact that God is giving up on us
culturally. And again, one of the best examples I can give you of
the cultural insanity that has gripped not just our country but the
entire western world is something that's happening right now in
Belgium. *Lifenews.com* reported on the case of a Belgian woman
named Laura. "She has good friends, loves good coffee and theater.
And she has felt that she wanted to die ever since childhood."
Laura says: "Life, that's not for me." This summer, euthanasia
will end her life, full of inner conflict, depression and self
destruction. In Belgium euthanasia for psychological reasons is
done when a psychiatrist agrees that the psychological pain that a
person is experiencing cannot be relieved in a way that the

individual finds acceptable. That means, Laura may be treatable, but Laura has decided that the only acceptable "treatment" in this case is her death. Understand something. Laura is in excellent physical health and Laura is 24 years old. You know, physician-assisted suicide is legal now in four states in the United States. You may remember a few months ago I did a story, I mentioned about Brittany Maynard, the woman who moved to one of those states so that she could have assisted suicide because she was in the latter stages of brain cancer. Laura is taking her life with the full support of the medical community. She's doing this at age 24 because she is depressed. Once again, horrifying activities, greatly approved. I mean, I read this stuff and I can only say, God help us. I can give you a dozen other examples where politically, philosophically, morally, and culturally it seems like God is giving us up, that he has removed the restraining hand of common grace, and he's left us to our own insanity.

Jesus said in our text this morning: *"The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day."* And what we are seeing is that the insanity that reigns when God's word is obvious, it's the insanity that reigns when God's word is rejected and no longer received. It is no longer the standard by which we live our lives. And God is giving us all the proof that we need to see that the

worst kind of punishment we receive from him, the worst kind of tyranny there is is to be subjected to ourselves. You know, light has indeed come into the world, and we have stated in absolutely unequivocal terms as a people, as a nation, and as a culture, we prefer darkness. And so darkness is what we get.

That's the bad news. There is good news in this, believe it or not. There is good news. First good news is this: We have to understand that there's a vast difference between understanding that God has given us up, and God is giving us up. That is to say it ain't over till it's over, and it ain't over yet. In *John 8:12* it says: *Then Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life."* As the elders begin distributing the bread, I would like us to consider that in spite of all of this darkness that we see around us, we still have an incredible privilege. *John 12:46* says this, this is Jesus's words: *"I have come as a light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me would not remain in darkness."* I'm reminded of the poem by Rudyard Kipling with it's two opening lines that says: If you can keep your head when all around you are losing theirs and blaming it on you. Consider that you and I have the light of the world that gives us the grace to keep our heads when everyone else around us seems to be losing theirs.

Consider as the elements are being passed out this warning that God gives about communion itself. This is from 1 Corinthians 11, starting at verse 28. God 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.*

I say this each month: Communion is an extremely serious undertaking and to enter into it in an unworthy manner is to court disaster. What I say is this, if you are not absolutely confident that you are a child of the King or if you have something that you need to reconcile with your brother and sister, first take care of that and then come back to the altar. If that's the case, just pass the elements on when they come to you. As I say each month, nobody's going to look at you and think that you're strange. In fact, they may well think you wise. But on the other hand, we also can make the mistake of thinking that unless we are spotlessly perfect, unless we are flawless in our behavior, we're unworthy to receive communion, and that's the devil's lie as well. Being a child of the King doesn't mean that we never sin and it doesn't mean that we never fail. It means that we understand that the salvation that we have received is a gift that no one is ever

capable of earning. Again, I repeat Dane Ortlund's words. He says: "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." I mean, it also means that when we do fail, we are aware of the fact that we have sinned. Why? Because God now lives inside us. God's Holy Spirit is inside us convicting us, and so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us. That's why he says in *1 John 1:9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So being a child of the King doesn't mean that we are spotless and sinless, it means that when we sin, we understand we have an advocate with the Father, that we have someone who speaks in heaven on our behalf. In *1 John 2:1* it 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 Christ and his righteousness that stands in the place of our sinfulness, we are now free to eat from his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus Christ purchased for you. I mean, he lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we deserved to die in our place so that we could be made worthy of heaven. Just take a moment and consider the privilege that you've received, consider the darkness that makes up this entire world,

and consider the light that has been placed in your hands, in your heart, in your spirit.

1 Corinthians, 11th chapter, the 23rd verse 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."* Take, and eat.

As the elders begin to distribute the cup, I would like to make the case for the good news in all of that. Now to do that, I want to go back to an illustration that Donald Grey Barnhouse gave many, many years ago, and it was shortly after the war and Barnhouse was a soldier and he was in Belgium and he happened to be traveling, touring, and he wanted to get something for his mother, so he went into a Belgium lace shop. He saw the prices of all the different items there and he was astounded at how expensive it was, and he wanted to know why it was so expensive. And so they began to explain the intricacies of Belgian lace. In order to better demonstrate what was -- what this lace consisted of, they brought out a piece of black velvet to put the white lace on. He said it made a critical difference, because the blackness of the velvet served to highlight the whiteness and the perfection of the lace. Well, the same is true of the cultural rot and the decay that we

are experiencing today. You see, the decay and the darkness of our culture stands in complete contrast to the life and the light of the word of God. Our culture is experiencing the wrath of God through the darkness and the rot that is pervading it, but even that has a purpose in God's economy. *Romans 3* says this: *But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) By no means! For then how could God judge the world?* See, Jesus said it is God's word that is now judging the world, but he is also using that judgment to demonstrate the glory of God. I can only tell you for myself personally, I've had more fruitful discussions with folks recently than I've had in years, because anyone who chooses to can look and at least get a hint that this culture is collapsing. And most folks don't have a Bible to fall back on because for years now it's not even been part of their cultural discussion. I mean, for many the idea of the Bible and God's way of doing business and living life is new, it's novel, it's literally -- it's unheard of. In other words, God is giving us an incredible opportunity through the cultural rot that is surrounding us. We have the secrets of eternal life. I mean, we understand that God himself became a man, that he lived among us this perfect life, and that he offered this perfect life up for our sin, and we have the privilege of our eyes being opened. We're no longer blind. God has set us in a culture in which darkness and

blindness have become the norm. That, my friends, is a privilege and an opportunity. And we've also been given God's word. And in God's word we understand the wisdom and the insight necessary to live this life to its absolute fullest. But you know, in order to do that we have to ask ourselves this question: Is God's word a priority in our lives? I mean, if we were honest, I think most of us would have to say it's probably not. I think that's a tragedy. It's almost as if God has -- has taken each and every one of us and deposited a hundred million dollars in our celestial bank account, and we all draw out of it maybe ten bucks a week. I mean, everything you need to live a life of absolute joy and contentment in spite of what is going on around you can be found in this book that God gives us, and I've often said you can get one for a buck down at the dollar store. The problem is just owning a Bible without taking it into yourself is going to do you no more good than thinking that simply owning an antibiotic without taking it into yourself is going to cure you of some kind of disease. See, in both cases, you have to find a way to get what is in them inside you, and that takes effort, that takes work. And that's what small groups are all about, that's what midweek prayer study is all about, that's what the new Facebook page is all about.

I would like us to consider one other scripture that is perfectly apropos for this morning. It is *1 Peter 2:9-10*, it says this,

God's telling us: *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* We are the ones that God has chosen to give that mercy to. We are the ones who have been called out of that darkness into his light. We're the only ones who can give that light to those who are still in the darkness. What an incredible privilege we have, but also what an incredible responsibility. Just take a minute to think on that.

In 1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter, 25th verse, it says this, it 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.

In the head, heart, and feet part is the fact that there are some things that we can do. There was another couple that I was going to speak about, the Kleins. The Kleins were the ones who had Melissa's Cakes and I don't know if you followed what happened, they refused to make a cake for a same-sex wedding and they have been pulverized. Their business was picketed, their children were threatened, they lost their business, it was -- they were literally

run out of town in terms of what they were able to do business wise, and they faced and just found out that they are going to have to pay \$135,000 fine for not being willing to bake this cake. And so what I wanted to say is that there are two different ways to approach this. Number one, the first one should be the obvious one, and that is God says we have a corporate responsibility. And the corporate responsibility is contained in *2 Chronicles 7:14*: *If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.* I know this was written to the Jews and this was written about Israel, but the principles remain the same, God doesn't place the spiritual solution to this issue out there in somebody else's hands, he places it in our hands. He says, "If my people." That's not politicians, that's us. The solution is not political or philosophical or moral or cultural. It's spiritual. It is God's people humbling themselves, turning from sin, and pleading with God for forgiveness. Listen to what God says if we do that. God says: *I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

You know, I think of this couple and this couple has made this decision, the Kleins made this decision and what they have gone through and the second part of this is that we also have a need for

community. Each of us have got to stick together. God has given us this incredible resource of brothers and sisters who understand the gospel and understand what it means to lift each of us up. And so community means not just locally here, community means caring for people who are suffering under what's taking place right now. I mean, God is giving us up and the Kleins are taking the brunt of it. So when people say what can I do, first thing you can do is what -- what Fred was alluding to today, you can meet us for prayer. I can't tell you how depressing it is to go down there and see nobody. I mean, I'm always there 'cause I have to be there, but you don't. And it's incredibly depressing to know that in the midst of this crumbling culture, it almost seems like nobody cares. So we can pray, that is a huge part of what the solution is, and the other part is that you can be part of this community whether it's not just locally here or around the country. People say how can you do that? Last week I said, you know, you can get out your credit card. I got out my credit card and I made a donation to the Kleins through a website that is helping them to pay their \$135,000 fine. I even sent them a note, said, "We're praying for you." If we don't band together, if we don't see this as one body locally and universally, then the enemy's going to win. He loves to divide and conquer. A house divided against itself will not stand. That's how he works. But we're the ones with the privilege, we're the ones who have been given the light. We're the ones with the

responsibility to bring that light outside these doors into the community. We have this incredible opportunity.

I was going to close with this challenge. I was going to say all of us have non believing friends. They all see what's going on in this culture, and some of them may think that it's wonderful, they think it's great, but the vast majority of them can't figure it out, they don't understand what's going on. So you have fresh opportunities now to invite your unsaved friends, your unsaved neighbors, people that you don't know just over for tea or for dinner or for a time and just to pray and to ask God for an opening. And when people say what in the world is going on, there it is. So let me do that right now, let me just conclude in this prayer.

Father, I just want to lift up our corporate responsibility. We have sinned, we have sinned greatly before you, we have shaken our fist in your face. We need to pray, we need to humbly come before you and acknowledge that sin as individuals and as a nation and to beg and to plead with you to heal this nation. Corporately, Lord, we are sinners, individually we are sinners. And Father, I pray that you would give us not just the healing and the -- the grace that accompanies your son's death, I pray that you would also give us opportunity to bring that healing and that truth to this world

that is dying to know about it. Give us the opportunity to invite those who are bewildered by what's taking place and don't know why, give us the opportunity to give them your gospel. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.