

**Pastor Tom Mortenson**

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

**August 31, 2014**

**They Picked Up Stones to Stone Him**

**John 10:24-33**

**Prayer:** *Father, we just again thank you for the cross, we thank you for the incredible gift that you've given to us of the precious blood of your Son. And lord, again, as -- as we have thus far worshipped you in song, we want to worship you by opening your book, by focusing in on what it is you've done for us on the cross, and so this morning, Lord, I pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, we acknowledge again that without your Spirit's presence, this is a hopeless exercise. Father, guide us, walk us through your word, give us the ability to enter into what it is you've done for us and give us the ability to make it a permanent part of our lives. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

You know, I normally start out saying this is the first Sunday of the month and as you well know, this is the last Sunday of August, and so we cheated a little bit, 'cause the picnic is next week, but nonetheless this is the day we remember Jesus and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and there for the last time 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 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 in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to remember this sacrifice on a regular basis, and this what we call "the Lord's Table," and we celebrate it once a month. We do that by meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, by examining ourselves, by asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, 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."*

Now we've been following the life of Jesus and we've worked our way so far up to the tenth chapter of the gospel of John, and if you remember what's been taking place there, last time Jesus is engaged

in a very bitter dialogue with the religious leaders, and it's a conversation that has gotten so heated and so bitter at this point they're picking up stones to stone him. Let me just read to you where we're at in *John 10:24-33*. It says: *So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."* The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, *"I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?"* The Jews answered him, *"It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."*

*"You, being a man, make yourself God."* Now, if you've ever had an extended conversation with either Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons, you'll know that one of the things that they don't want to discuss at all is the important -- the most important difference that they have with Christians, and that is the deity of Christ. Mormons and

Jehovah's Witnesses are not Christians because they do not accept Jesus Christ as God in the flesh. I've had many conversations with wonderful people who happen to be caught up in the cult of Jehovah's Witnesses, and time and time again you hear them state their belief that nowhere in the Bible do you find Jesus claiming to be God. Well, this scripture is the answer to that claim. This isn't present day Christians, this is not Mormons, this is not Jehovah's Witnesses who are reacting to Jesus's claim to be God, this is the actual hearers of his words. Verse 31: *The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."* So not only does this scripture disprove the claim that Jesus never claimed to be God, but there's another word in that passage that basically doubles the ante. It's that word "again." Verse 31: *The Jews picked up stones again to stone him.* You see, that word brings us back to another conversation that Jesus had that had a similar bad ending back in John 8. The Jews back in John 8 said this, in *John 8:53*, it said: *"Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets who died! Who do you make yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.' But you*

have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet 50 years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. So once again we have Jesus claiming that he's the eternally preexistent "I am" who was alive and present before Abraham even was, and Abraham's been dead for centuries. And the Jews see such a clear claim to deity in Jesus's claim that they pick up stones once again to stone him. And again two chapters later in John 10, Jesus claims that the Father and he are in fact one, and again they're picking up stones saying, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."

There can be no mistaking that Jesus made the claim that he was God. We also know that that claim itself is what brought out the long knives, and this was not a surprise to Jesus. This is what he told his disciples in John 15:18 he said: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world

*hates you."* Then in verse 23, he says: *"Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But the word that is written in their law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'"*

You see, the Jews and the crowds loved Jesus as a provider. They adored him as a healer, but they hated him for who he really was, you see, and the closer he came to who he really was, the more he put out the understanding of who he was, that he was God's own son in the flesh, a God that they would at some point have to answer to, well, the more murderous they became. So they once again begin to pick up rocks. And Jesus is nonplussed. I mean, he's seen this before. And if you are a lover of Jesus Christ, perhaps you've seen this before as well. You see, you can talk about a generic little "G" god and most people are not going to raise a fuss. You can even mention Jesus, and as long as it's part of an exclamation or joke or even a curse, people are not going to give you a hard time. But if you acknowledge Jesus as he truly is, with a respect that is due him, you can expect significant push back. Lord Jesus Christ. Those are not words that you hear in this culture at all. You hear them all the time here but here it really doesn't count. You see, here we're among friends, we're among believers, it's easy to say that. Here we acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ and

we bask in the light of his glory. But you see, the Lord Jesus does not want the truth just shouted here. He wants it shouted out there.

Listen to what Jesus once said in *Matthew 5:14*, he said: *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."* Now we don't hide lights under baskets. We place them where they can give light to the entire house, but what if the house is already buried in light? I mean, what if shining additional light there is no longer critical, in fact what if it's almost superfluous? You know, a candle's a wonderful thing to have when I'm down in the basement and the lights are out and I need to get a little bit of light to see where I'm going, it is absolutely invaluable, but that very same candle out in my backyard at 12:00 noon on a sunny day is practically useless. Well, so is bearing the light exclusively to those who already have an abundance of it. See, the point is light is meant to shine in the darkness and the light of Christ that we share each week in corporate worship is designed to encourage us to carry the light which we receive in abundance to a place where they have little or none of it. We delight in expressing the lordship

of Christ in a place where that freedom is still ours, but make no mistake about it, that freedom is not guaranteed. I mean, what is happening to our brothers and sisters in Syria, in Iraq, in Nigeria, and the rest of the world is much more the norm than the peace that we enjoy right here today. And the darkness that they are experiencing is profound, yet they still shine the light of the gospel into that darkness. And what we can do for them right now is obviously to pray for them, to petition God and our government for them. I must have signed a half dozen petitions in the last two weeks. And to simply remember them. *Hebrews 13:3* says: *Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you are also in the body.* Gao Zhisheng is a Chinese dissident who we've been praying for for five years. We found out that he was released. That was an enormous blessing to us because we have been praying for him. He's not just some disembodied soul with a strange sounding foreign name. He's a real person. That's why we remember Asia Bibi and Saeed Abidini as well. These are real people.

But secondly we need to take advantage of the freedom that we have now to begin growing our own light because at some point our freedom may well be gone. Listen to what Jesus said in *John 12:35*: *So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you.*



*The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. Now Jesus was referring to his own bodily presence but he wanted his disciples to know that things were soon going to radically change. Life was going to get considerably harder, and the light was going to encounter profound darkness. Jesus wanted his disciples to know what was coming. And he knew that none of what was going to take place was going to happen by accident, and we know that none of it that's taking place today is by accident as well. This is how he warned them in Matthew 10:16, he said: "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and as innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for*

*truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."*

That's a pretty scary warning, but I think it goes without saying that it's a valid warning for us today. You know, we all -- we think this is unthinkable to imagine that this could happen here. You know but if you are a Coptic Christian in Egypt, if you are an Iraqi Christian in Mosul, if you are a Syrian Christian in Aleppo, you've been watching this stuff unfold before your very eyes.

*"Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you"* is a warning to us. We need to take advantage of the freedom that we have today. And if we're unwilling or unable or simply too afraid to share the gospel now while we are bathed in light, well then what makes us think we're going to find the courage for that when some form of darkness overtakes us. You see, the hatred that Jesus felt has not abated in 2,000 years. To be frank, it is waiting for every one of us right outside those doors. It's waiting for us to get too close, too uncomfortable, and too real with the Jesus we speak of to start expressing itself even here. Jesus felt it, and his disciples felt it, and we're going to feel it. Verse 22: *"And you will be hated by all for my name's sake."* You see, when Jesus drove home who he really was, the crowd picked up rocks to kill him. When the disciples got real, the authorities said this in *Acts 5:28*, they told them: *"We strictly charge you not to teach in*

*this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him." When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.*

The Middle East is seeing this played out today. We've not even reached the stage where the dress rehearsals are starting. And the questions I think we all want answered is this: What will we face when we get real with the gospel? See, our brothers and sisters in Iraq and Syria are being branded now, they're being branded as believers. That symbol that we have on the door, that letter N is being put on their doors, it stands for the Nazarene, these are people who worship Christ. That darkness that they are experiencing is not even close to what we are experiencing. I mean, we are still walking in the dimming light of a collapsing Christian culture, and that makes persecution for us strictly optional. But you know that gives us a completely different challenge than anybody else in the world has.

Let me read to you what Nik Ripken -- how Nik Ripken puts this in *The Insanity of God*. He's describing optional persecution. He says: "For most believers, persecution is completely avoidable. If someone simply leaves Jesus alone, doesn't seek him or follow him, then persecution will simply not happen. Beyond that, even if someone becomes a follower of Jesus, persecution will likely not happen if the faith is kept private and personal. If a person is silent about their faith in Jesus, the chance of being persecuted is very small. So if our goal is reducing persecution, that task is easily achieved. First, just leave Jesus alone. Second, if you do happen to find him, just keep him to yourself. Persecution stops immediately where there is no faith and where there is no witness. The reason for persecution, then, is that people keep finding Jesus -- and then they refuse to keep him to themselves."

So as we approach communion this morning, the question that I would like us to ask ourselves is: Do we keep Jesus to ourselves? You see, the problem of seeing Jesus as our personal savior is that he can easily become our private savior. I'm in, thank God, good luck to you, rest of the world. You know, we need to ask ourself the same question that Andy raised the other night at the Wednesday night Bible study. I heard it was a very spirited one, I wasn't there, but the question was raised, what did Paul mean by these words in *2 Timothy 2:12*? Paul said this: *If we endure, we will*

*also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful -- for he cannot deny himself.*

Well, I'm going to leave the full discussion of this to Andy and to Wednesday night. And if you think that's a shameless plug, it is. But I want to do this as we meditate, as the communion begins, as we meditate on what Jesus did for us, as we begin to examine our consciences, I would like us to ask God's Holy Spirit to bring to our minds those times when each of us have denied him. God is faithful. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, but first we have to confess denying him as sin.

Now, Jesus came to this planet to be offered up as a sacrifice for sinners. He came to this planet on a rescue mission because every single human being on this planet is born already doomed. We are, all of us, sons of Adam and when Adam fell, every one of us inherited his fallenness. And we don't consciously realize it but every one of us comes from the womb shaking our fist at the very one who created us. And God's answer to sinful creation's rebellion was to take on flesh, to live out a flawless life, to then offer up that life as a substitute for ours. God's perfect justice demanded a death penalty, and God's perfect mercy provided his own Son as the means to pay that price.

As the elders come forward to begin distributing the bread, I would

like us to ask ourselves the simple question: Have I denied him? And as they are passing out the bread, I want us to consider the warning that God gives concerning communion itself. This is in *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 state this proviso every month, I say communion is extremely serious business, and to enter into it in an unworthy manner as to literally court disaster. I say if you are not absolutely confident that you are a child of the king or if you first need to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you bring your gifts before the altar, when the elements come, you just pass them along. Nobody's going to look at you strangely, nobody's going to think something's wrong with you; in fact they may well think you are wise. As I say each month, on the other hand, we can also make the mistake of thinking that unless we're spotlessly perfect, we're not worthy to receive communion, and that, too, is a mistake. You see, being a child of the king does not mean that we don't sin and that we never fail. It means that we recognize salvation as a gift that no one is ever capable of earning on their

own. As Dane Ortland puts it: "In the kingdom of God the one thing that qualifies you is knowing you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." It also means that when we do fail, we are aware that we have sinned because God's Spirit is within us, convicting us, and so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive us and cleanse us, a Father who says in *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.* Well, being a child of the king does not mean that we are without sin. What it means is that we now have an advocate with the Father, someone who speaks out on our behalf. Again, *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.* You see, because we have Jesus' righteousness and not our own, we are now free to eat from his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus 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 we could be made worthy of heaven. So as the communion bread is being distributed, take some time now to ask yourself: Do I keep Jesus to myself? Has my personal savior become my private savior?

1 Corinthians the 11th chapter, the 23rd verse says this: *For I*

*received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." So take, and eat.*

*I want to go back to our scripture this morning which is John 10:32-36, it says this: Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God." Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came -- and Scripture cannot be broken -- do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the son of God'?"*

*I want to repeat the remarks that I had about this text after the T4G conference because it bears directly on this. Jesus in this passage is demonstrating his superior knowledge of the scriptures, and he is also puncturing the pretensions of the Pharisees. Kevin De Young did a marvelous job of pointing out that Jesus, in response to these accusations that he claimed to be God, what Jesus does is he quotes an obscure line from an obscure Psalm, Psalm 82 to make his case. Let me just read to you Psalm 82. It says: A*



*Psalm of Asaph. God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods -- little "G" -- he holds judgment: "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah. Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of wicked." They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. I said, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince." Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!*

See, what we have here is Jesus giving a defense and in his defense he raises the question of the use of the word "gods," little "G." And he does that by pointing out that even earthly rulers, for that matter wicked earthly rulers, have been referred to by the author of scripture as "gods," again little "G." So Jesus says in effect, I mean, if God himself called these wicked men "gods," well then why are you giving me a hard time when I, who have been consecrated by the very God himself, refer to myself as a son of God? Jesus simply renders his enemies speechless. I mean, the scripture says their response to his statement was they tried to arrest him. Because as *John 10:42* said: *Many believed in him there.* See but, you know, what matters here is not really the main argument that

Jesus makes, it's kind of an obscure point, what matters here is rather a tiny little five-word parenthetical phrase that Jesus utters right in the middle of that argument. Something that the Pharisees and all of those around them would have taken for granted, something for which we have a very difficult time. The phrase occurs in verse 35: Jesus said: *"If he called them gods to whom the word of God came -- and the Scripture cannot be broken -- do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming' because I said, 'I am the son of God'?"* The phrase is *"and the Scripture cannot be broken."* See, that little phrase basically said it all. Even the Pharisees understood that the final authority in all things, well it was the Scripture. And Jesus' referral to an obscure passage in an obscure Psalm as being part of the scripture, well that essentially ended the argument. So the point is this, if Jesus treats the Scripture as the ultimate in divine authority, would we have any reason not to? You know, De Young points out that dozens of times Jesus appeals to a word in the Scripture by saying, "Have you not heard?" And he's understanding that simply hearing from God's word that way, it literally settles the matter. Six times he chided the Pharisees saying, "Have you not read," stating that by virtue of something being in Scripture, it settles the argument. In *Matthew 5:17* Jesus states the case directly, he says: *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to*

*abolish them but to fulfill them, for truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.*" Not an iota, not a dot. Some of your translations say not a jot or a tittle of the law. You know, jots and tittles were the smallest grammatical marks that you could find in all the scripture, and Jesus uses them to mean that virtually everything in Scripture including the jots and the tittles is of absolute truth. When Jesus said in *Matthew 5:27*: "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" When he said that, he was expanding what the word of God had already laid down to include not just actions but the intent that goes before the actions, and he was tying it directly to what it been written in Scripture. He says, "*You have heard that it was said.*" Well, he said that because it was first spoken and it was spoken by God to Moses when he took down the ten commandments, and it was then written down in God's word, and because it was written in God's word, it had the ultimate authority. It's an authority that Jesus stated would not pass away until all things would be completely fulfilled in him.

You know, the Bible's under attack from every single corner including its historical accuracy. You know, Jesus treated

biblical history as historical fact. As the elders begin to pass out the cup, I'd like to read to you some historical data that Jesus gives us in *Matthew 12:38*. It says: *Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the Prophet Jonah. For just Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here."* Well, as Kevin De Young put it, Jesus is stating biblical history as an historical fact. So here's the deal. We either have a great fish, the men of Nineveh, Jonah the prophet swallowed by a fish, the Queen of Sheba and Solomon as existing and Jesus as historically accurate or none of them existed and much of modern scholarship is accurate. You see, you have to choose. It is either Jesus or contemporary scholarship. It is either Jesus or The Discovery Channel. Take your choice.

See, the history of Scripture is accurate because Jesus knew the God of history was its author. In *Matthew 19* it says this, it says: The Pharisees came to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?" You know, Jesus could not have said that unless he believed the Creator of the universe was the very same person who wrote *Genesis 2:24*, the very same words. I mean, he was literally quoting his Father. See, Jesus understood that to quote from a verse of Scripture was the same as quoting from God himself. And the Scripture itself speaks with its own authority. *Galatians 3:8* says: *And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham.* *Mark 12:36* says: *David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared.* *Hebrews 3* says: *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says.* *Romans 9:17*: *For the scripture says to Pharaoh.*

Again, De Young pointed out that when Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert, as he said, he didn't shoot him down with super powered lightening bolts that flew out of his eyes. No, he had no need for that. Instead he repeated what he said in *Matthew 4*: "It is written," "It is written," "It is written." He said

that because he knew the ultimate authority was the written word of God. Folks, you know it is that authority that is under assault today. There are folks today who accuse us of believing in what is now called bibliolatry. I don't know if you have ever heard that word, bibliolatry? It's an idolatry of worshipping the Bible, they say. There are those who say that we need to look at the Bible through the imagined eyes of Jesus. Instead of wrestling with difficult passages, they now dismiss them by saying, "oh, Jesus would never have approved of that." And so they use the author of scripture to deny scripture itself. See, the bottom line question when it comes to scripture is this: Who has the final authority? Does the scripture answer to our understanding of time and space of history and grammar or do we give the scriptures whatever authority we want? Listen to what De Young says. He says: "We must not seek to know the word who is divine apart from the divine words of the Bible. And we ought not to read the words of the Bible without an eye to the word incarnate. When it comes to seeing God and his truth in Christ and in the holy Scripture one is not more reliable or more trustworthy or more relevant than the other. Scripture, because it is the breathed out word of God, possesses the same authority as the God man Jesus Christ. Submission to the Scriptures is submission to God. Rebellion against the Scriptures is rebellion against God."

Now, you may have noticed that folks feel the same about the Bible as they do about Jesus. You know, as long as that book is distant, as long as it's dusty, as long as it's up on the shelf, as long as it's just "the good book," well, it's not very threatening. But as soon as it becomes too close, too uncomfortable and too real, it gets treated the same way Jesus got treated, and the reason why is that they are both inextricably bound. You see, every word of scripture speaks of Christ, and every part of Christ spoke scripture. Tim Keller said this, he said: "Look at Jesus Christ. Every time he was in trouble he used the Word of God. When he was tempted, he used the Word. When he was suffering on the cross, he used the Word." Jesus himself summed up why God's word is so precious in *John 5:39*, he said this, he said: "*You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.*" We don't have a greater privilege than bearing witness to the gospel in a world that is growing increasingly darker by the minute. And we don't have a greater resource than the Word of God, written by God himself. And you can still get one for a dollar at the dollar store. I want us to thank him this morning for his word. Thank him for his flesh, and spend some time thanking him for his blood shed for us.

1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter, 25th verse 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.*

Well, this is the time that I call heads, heart, and feet. This is the time where we want to draw some kind of practical consideration of what it means to remember Christ and his cross, and part of the practical application that I have today is really -- really comes in the form of a plug, and the plug is for Tri-States Pregnancy Center. I've been associated with them for a little over a year now, and they love babies and they love Jesus. And because they love babies and because they love Jesus, they are a target for the enemy.

Listen to what Jesus tells us in his word about the enemy. In *John 8:44* he says: *"He was a murderer from the beginning, and he has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* You know, abortion and the abortion industry is the perfect combination of lies and murder. It's lies towards desperate mothers, and it's murder for the unborn. It's the perfect storm for the enemy, and he loves, he loves the abortion industry. And standing against him are crisis pregnancy centers. I mean, is it any wonder that the enemy hates crisis



pregnancy centers and that the lie is one of his main weapons? He's also not at all averse to using politicians. I have a statement here about -- from our mayor, mayor of New York City that is, Mayor Bill de Blasio. This is from Life News, it says: *LifeSiteNews reported that de Blasio expressed his view that since crisis pregnancy centers refuse to perform abortions, they do not offer "legitimate health care." He has promised to continue the city's appeal of a court order striking down a law aimed at closing down these centers. Should the court appeal fail, however, de Blasio states he will "craft new regulations to prevent crisis pregnancy centers from masquerading as legitimate health care providers."*

See, the world and the flesh and the devil, they are all aligned against these centers. And a Christ-centered center he particularly loathes. Well, Tri-States is a Christ-centered center. We have weekly prayer meetings there now, we meet on Thursdays at 11:00 o'clock just to uplift the center and to pray against the spiritual warfare that takes place at that place. I have no doubt that there are demonic forces that detest the fact that right under Prime Time Meats is this group of dedicated volunteers that are working to push back what the enemy wants to do.

You know what? One of the things that I wanted to mention also is the fact that there's a dinner coming up, and you know, it's -- you've heard these things so many times, there's a this, there's a that, there's a fund raiser, the primary way that the center raises money is by having a banquet, and I had no idea how much work is involved in putting one of these things together until I got put on the banquet committee which Elisa is heading up, and she just grabbed me into that, and I realize now there's an enormous amount of work of putting out invitations, of trying to sell program ads to various businesses, some of whom are delighted to be in there, some of whom don't want to be associated with a pregnancy center, but selling those ads, finding out who's going to be there, getting sponsors for the table, getting people to come to the table, it's a huge undertaking, and it's the primary fundraising that they do for the entire year. Finding a speaker, they found Tom Michael Zahradnik who is the head of Sound of Life. If you've ever turned on Sound of Life, you've heard him, he's an ardent pro lifer. He's going to be there, he's going to be sharing. I just want to say if you're practically trying to find a way of how can I push out, push back against the darkness that is pushing in, the Tri-States Pregnancy Center is a wonderful place to volunteer, to be a part of, to join in prayer, to join as a volunteer to say what can I do to help here. It's open every day of the week, I think -- every week day, on a limited basis. And our new director is right there

sitting in the back. That's Maria and Pat, they are the power that really run that place. We just appreciate them greatly and what they do, and the energy that they bring to it. But what I appreciate more than anything is how Christ-centered this place is. When a girl comes into that place who's in a crisis pregnancy center, they want to address her spiritual needs, her need for Jesus Christ. Yes, she has an immediate need of this pregnancy and what is she going to do about it, but she has a huge bigger need of what do you do about your relationship to Christ. And the Center seeks to address that and because they seek to address that, they need our prayer support, they need our financial support, they need our support as volunteers. So I'm expecting every single one of you to be at that dinner on the 29th of September at Best Western, good food -- the 28th. If you come the 29th, you have an excuse because it's over. Okay. That doesn't mean you can come the 29th and say you did.

Anyway, I just want to lift up the Center. I want to lift up what they do because what I've been talking about this morning is really the push back of evil that's become ridiculously obvious in the Middle East. We see what it's like when the cover is ripped bare, and as I said, we haven't even gotten to the dress rehearsal yet, about what it's going to be like for us to share the gospel in an increasingly hostile environment. Well, come to the center, it's

not hostile there but they understand the hostility that is out there, they understand the task that is in front of them, they understand the darkness that they are facing and they are the light in that darkness. So let's lift them up in prayer.

*Father, I just want to thank you for the Center, I thank you for the hand that is upon it, I thank you for the work that it does, I thank you for the future that it has which is bright. Father, I just pray that you would just continue to work in the hearts and minds of all of those who are part of the Center, that you would draw even more folks in to be volunteers to support it, to support it financially, to support it any way that they can, Lord, because it is pushing back against the darkness, and we praise you and thank you for that. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*