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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

August 1, 2021

Communion Sunday

Mark 7:11-13

Prayer: *Father, we just again we thank you for this opportunity to come together as a body, to celebrate what it is you've done for us on the cross. Father, I just want to pray today as we open up your word that you would give us a new and deeper understanding of what it is you've done for us at the cross. We pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, that you would be guiding us into your word, that you would be giving us the ability to see it, to sense it, to know it and again to make it of permanent value. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well once again it's that first Sunday of the month, and this is the Sunday, the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died he met with his disciples to celebrate his last 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 the 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 the remembrance of his sacrifice on a monthly basis or daily basis, just a regular basis. We do it once a month, others do it once a year, some do it every week. We call it "the Lord's table", and we do so by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, by examining ourselves, that's asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, by then confessing our sins and then participating in the elements. Jesus said to them in *John 6:53: "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're following the life of Christ this time in the gospel of Mark. And last time out we looked at Jesus's confrontation with the religious leaders and the crowd that was following him and all of his miracles. And we saw that Jesus had used that circumstance to address hardened hearts, even the hardened hearts of his disciples. Jesus at this point is now regularly confronting and

being confronted by the Pharisees and the scribes. So *Mark 7* opens up with this statement, it says: *Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem.*

Jesus was now such an official threat that a contingency of religious leaders have been sent from Jerusalem to follow him, to track him and his disciples. And track him they do, looking for any violation of their religious rules. And it didn't take them long to find an infraction. Verse 2 says: *(They) saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders.)* Well this is yet another confrontation that Jesus has with the religious leaders and as I mentioned before, each one seems to be progressively more absurd. Jesus heals a man with a withered hand right in front of their eyes and they say you can't do that on a Sabbath. He casts a man with -- casts a demon out of a man and they claim, well, you've done that by the power of Satan. And now to their complete dismay the Pharisees see incredible healing taking place that they have no control whatsoever over. The blind can now see, the crippled can now walk, the diseased are now made whole and what really jumps out at these religious leaders is the disciples' hand washing practice and it's got nothing to do with hygiene, it's instead a manmade part of ceremonial law that

the religious leader scrupulously adhere to -- quote -- "*holding to the tradition of the elders.*" It says: *Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. Well Jesus is having none of this, so he lets them have it. It says: He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME. AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.'*" What Jesus wouldn't stand for and what he put his finger on was the religious leaders' hypocrisy. They were far more intent on playing religious games than they were on scrupulously attending to their laws. I mean the reason they were there in the first place was they had rightly discerned that somehow or other Jesus had their number and so they were now going to follow him to challenge him at every point in order to accrue enough evidence to take him out. And all the while they're thinking, well, they're blessed of God, they're doing his will, and nothing could have been further from that truth. I mean the leaders had managed to make their tradition not just co-equal with scripture but in their view superior to it, so that tradition became far more important to them than God's word, and again Jesus wouldn't have it. *He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO CURSES FATHER OR MOTHER, LET HIM BE PUT TO*

DEATH.' But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"—' (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

Well the first thing we notice about Jesus's response to the leaders' desire to elevate tradition is that Jesus's appeal is directly to scripture. I mean there's lots and lots of arguments today over what is the truth of Christianity and what is just empty tradition that's been passed on through the ages. And we know that traditions have very limited value and that scripture has ultimate value and that Jesus uses scripture to trump tradition. And so he speaks about a command that you find in Leviticus and Exodus that we in the 21st century would find outrageous at best and the command says: *"HE WHO CURSES FATHER OR MOTHER, LET HIM BE PUT TO DEATH."* You know, say I lose it with my parents, I curse them out, I'm supposed to be now executed? Well there's some evidence of this in scripture. I mean there's an account in Leviticus of a man being executed for cursing out God. There's also account of a man being executed for gathering sticks on the Sabbath. But understand that these instances are far more about God making a statement than a stand. See the man cursing God and gathering sticks, those men

were examples of what is called "sinning with a high hand." Kind of like that (indicating). I mean it's not just sinning, it's sinning intentionally in a defiant way to emphasize one's defiance. To put it crudely it's literally sinning with your middle finger extended. And God reacts to that kind of extreme behavior with an extreme measure. I mean God took the extreme example of someone openly defying him and use that person's defiance as an example. You see, see that man that was gathering sticks on the Sabbath, he wasn't just out picking up sticks, he was executed because he essentially was saying, God, you said you shall not work on the Sabbath. Watch me as I go work on the Sabbath, and what are you going to do about it, God? Well the same is true with the man who cursed out God. He was calling out God with a high hand. He was challenging God's rule over Israel, and God made an example of him as well.

God sometimes makes an example of someone in order to impress on us the seriousness of the offences we sometimes take for granted. Remember Uzzah? Uzzah took for granted the holiness of God's tabernacle and he accidentally touched it as it was falling off an ox cart. Uzzah was concerned that it would fall into the mud, that it would become defiled, but he forgot that the only thing that God saw that would truly defile it was the touch of a human being. God's response was to take his life. And that shocked all the

people around him and it angered David, but God was making the point that he was holy. My guess is that Uzzah found himself blinking suddenly in the presence of God much sooner than he had anticipated and that God's people were taught a very difficult lesson. And we see God do this in the New Testament as well. We have the case of Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament. They sold a piece of property, they kept a portion of it for themselves and told Peter and the rest that they were donating the whole property to God's work. They basically embellished it with a half truth, not something that we would think of as a capital offense. But this was God's brand new church. This was a church that was growing in leaps and bounds and miracles were happening and people were coming in droves. And then this is what happened. This is Acts 5. It says: *Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."* When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had

happened.

Well, a short while later, Ananias's wife Sapphira comes in and she attempts to corroborate her husband's story. That's a big mistake. *Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events. See, God chose to make an example of them by taking their lives as well. My guess is for them is they also found themselves up in heaven much sooner than they had anticipated, and God's people once again were taught a very difficult lesson. Ananias and Sapphira were the unfortunate exceptions that God chose to prove a rule. I mean imagine if God sentenced everyone who had told a half truth to instant capital punishment, this place would be empty because none of us would be here. I mean so when Jesus says to the Pharisees: "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO CURSES FATHER OR MOTHER, LET HIM BE PUT TO DEATH,'"* he's not simply stating a general rule or statute, rather he's stating that honoring your parents means a great deal to God and

the Pharisees had managed by a sleight of hand to render that honor null and void. God could have used either a personal example such as Uzzah or Ananias and Sapphira or he could have used a statute with a severe penalty such as Jesus was quoting to point out areas in which truth and obedience is critical. I mean oftentimes just making a rule or a pronouncement with an extremely harsh consequence, just the rule itself was all that was necessary. It's kind of like what I used to do when I was much younger, my kids were much younger and they did something I thought was very bad. I said, "I'll rip your lungs out if you do that again," you know, except on a legislative level. And it's not really to be treated as a joke but it's really understood as hyperbole.

We have one example in King Cyrus. This is God, God moved King Cyrus to move the people to start rebuilding the temple. And so King Cyrus wanted to move his people and he sent them a warning about not getting with the program of rebuilding the temple, and here's how he encouraged his citizens to enthusiastically join in the process. This is what was said in *Ezra 6* by King Cyrus. It says: *Furthermore, I decree that if anyone defies this edict, a beam is to be pulled from their house and they are to be impaled on it. And for this crime their house is to be made a pile of rubble.* See, the edict itself should have been enough to discourage people from getting in the way of rebuilding the temple. Now was anyone

ever impaled on a beam from their house? I don't know but I highly doubt it. There's no record in scripture of anyone being executed for cursing out their parents as well. See the penalty and the prescription against cursing out your parents should have been enough, and Jesus isn't really focused on parents here anyway. What Jesus is pointing to here is not so much the value that God places on parents but rather the mockery of God's rules and laws that the Pharisees had by elevating their traditions above those of God's commands. I mean by Jesus's day they had managed to codify over 600 petty literal rules that they tried to substitute for a relationship with God, so it's no wonder that Jesus detested that approach as heartless lip service. *He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME. AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.'"*

See what Jesus is after here is not lip service of manmade rules parading themselves as worship, it's being able to see him, being able to hear him, not through your eyes, not through your ears, not through any other sensory ability but through your heart. There's a reason why we examine ourselves before we take communion, and it's not to make sure that we're hitting the majority of a bunch of petty rules just right. That's how the priests and the Pharisees

went about it. No, it's to make sure that our hearts are right before God. Just listen again. We've said it so many times, it's easy to just let it kind of go right in one ear and out the other. Listen again to God's warning about taking communion. This is what he says in *1 Corinthians 11*: *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.*

Now our proof that communion is extremely serious business is the example that God made of the very first communion services of the new church. Verse 30 says: *For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep*, and verse 29 explains why. It was for *eating and drinking in an unworthy manner*. This is how Paul described it. He said: *So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!* I mean Paul went on to say

that because the disgraceful way people were conducting themselves at communion services God had made some people sick and some people he outright killed. *"And many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep,"* that's what that means. Again, it's an extreme reminder of how seriously God takes his church, his holiness and communion itself. And so I say each time to enter into communion in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster, and I beg you, if you're not absolutely confident you're a child of the King, if you haven't by faith trusted Christ as your Savior, if you haven't straightened yourself out before God, by if you have anything against your brother bringing the sacrifice of yourself before him before you bring it to God, and get all of these things squared away, then don't take the elements. If you don't feel right then about participating, then err on the side of caution and get right with God first.

And as I always say also, on the other side you can make the mistake of thinking, oh, I have to be spotless in order to take communion, and that too is a mistake because being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin and that you never fail, it means that you understand that salvation is a gift that no one is ever capable of earning by being good, by their good behavior. And we quote Dane Ortlund each month because he sums it all up. 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." It also means that when we fail we're aware that we've sinned and there's a reason why, that's because God's Spirit is now inside us convicting us. And so we grieve 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're spotless or sinless, it means that we understand that when we do sin we have an advocate with the Father in heaven itself, the Lord Jesus Christ, 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 it's solely because we have Jesus, the Righteous One, and his righteousness and not our own that we're free to eat from his table. So I say each time if you love the Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus Christ purchased for you at the cross. He lived the life that we were supposed to live and then died the death we all deserve to die in our place so that we could be made worthy of heaven so that we could participate in his table. And as you do, ask yourself this morning am I giving God my heart or am I giving him lip service? Just take a moment to contemplate that before we take up the bread.

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.

One of the problems that we have with the Pharisees is that the character of these religious leaders at that time was so cartoonishly awful that it's easy for us to feel comparatively righteous compared to them. I mean to us they just appear silly. I mean they're constantly insisting that their manmade rituals for cleansing or their petty work rules that argued whether or not they could -- I mean they argued whether or not you could eat the egg of a chicken that was laid on the Sabbath because that was labor and you're not allowed to participate in any labor. They actually argued about whether or not you could spit into a pile of dust on the Sabbath because spitting into the dust might actually plow a tiny little furrow in the dust, and plowing is labor and labor is work and you don't work on the Sabbath. So they argued about these kind of things. Stuff became so petty and so ludicrous that it's easy for us to think we're far better than that because the bar was set so incredibly low. And it wasn't that Jesus was rejecting tradition altogether. What Jesus was rejecting what was elevating tradition itself over the scripture. Jesus said, *"All too well you*

reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition."

What Jesus was decrying was the clever way the Pharisees figured out to get around God's law about honoring one's parents. This is our text this morning. It says this. Jesus says: *For Moses said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO CURSES FATHER OR MOTHER, LET HIM BE PUT TO DEATH.'* But you say, *'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"—' (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."*

See, if your parent was destitute, if they needed a place to stay and you thought nothing of your obligation toward your parents, all you'd have to do is state, "My house is corban," that means that your house is now dedicated to God and therefore couldn't be used by your parents because now it's sacred. You can do that with any resource by saying it was dedicated to God, so mom and dad, sorry, can't use it. And one thing about dedicating your assets to God that way is that they may now technically belong to God but guess what, you still have the absolute use of them. So for all practical purposes all it did was give you a legal religious excuse for denying the honor your mother and father were entitled to.

And this clever way that the Pharisees had of ignoring God's law started out by suddenly redefining the law in the first place. That's the way the enemy always works. You see God said "*honor your father and your mother,*" and that means to have reverence, to have care, to have concern for them. Well the Pharisees simply re-translated the law to say "provide for your parents." Well that's a level far below the original command. It's a level that's easily countered by this clever trick of saying, well, I would have provided for my parents but all of my provisions are now given to God. And so this clever move by the pharisees absolved themselves of their obligation but the obligation was never just to provide for parents, it was to honor their parents. And so we see how suddenly the playing field shifts from the heart to the head. I mean to honor your parents requires caring about them, it meant caring about your obligation to God to bring honor to them both for God's sake and out of gratitude of God's means for providing for you as you grew up. And to shift this obligation from the heart to the head simply meant that it was now available to be redefined by technicalities that would give you your freedom to ignore your responsibility by still ostensibly giving you cover for -- quote -- "*doing the right thing.*" And it was that subterfuge, it was that hypocrisy that Jesus absolutely hated because it reflected a corruption on that part of us that mattered most to God. *He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you*

hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME. AND IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.'"

So how does this work for us? I mean certainly we're not guilty of this whole idea of corban because we don't deny our parents that honor because our system doesn't work that way. And understand that Jesus wasn't making just simply an example about failing to honor parents with the Pharisees. What he was decrying was that they moved virtually everything from the heart to the head, and they did it in order to figure out a technical way of getting around it. That's why Jesus said -- quote -- *"making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."* I wish I could say we're different but we're not.

You know, I know I'm starting to sound like a broken record when I tell people how much I love this show *The Chosen*. I don't know if I still have -- I had a t-shirt here. It's right here. This is a t-shirt that Bethany gave me for Father's day. See I even have the t-shirt, it says *The Chosen*. I'm constantly telling people about this show. And the reason why it hit me why I so loved this show is because the show doesn't have anything whatsoever to do with the church. That's a terrible indictment. This is simply a show about

how wonderful and powerful and wise and lovely Jesus Christ is. And I thought about how things are today, how the church has become almost a bad word. You know, I used to tell people a lot more about the bride of Christ but now I find myself hesitant to talk about the church because people's impressions of the church are a lot less than pretty. I mean you mention the church to people and people think of -- they think of sexual abuse, they think of people getting wealthy and flying around in private jets, they think of people living what was supposed to be an exemplary life only to die and find out that they were leading a double life of deception and sexual predation. I mean so much of this stemmed from the fact that we too often approach the gospel not with our hearts but with our heads. And like the Pharisees we have a tendency to push the gospel to our head so that we too can score technical victories that are actually as meaningless as theirs.

You know I hate to say it but there's a part in each of us that says, God, just tell me what is the bare minimum that I have to give you of myself in this life so that I can get to heaven. I mean I don't even care if I get there by the skin of my teeth. Just give me the bottom line. What do I have to do? What do I have to give you in order to get that? Well that was the mindset of the Pharisees. That's the mindset that they had and that's why they had the ability to do the damage that they did, and it's our

temptation as well. I mean one thing that I hate about being a preacher is that sometimes I feel complicit in a game that we play that suggests if we gather in here once a week and listen to some songs and hear a talk we can somehow convince ourselves that we've checked off the Christian box and we can go right back to living just like the rest of the world. I hate that I'm potentially part of something that can trick us into thinking that what we do here in this building this morning can be the sum and total of what we have in our hearts for Christ and kingdom. I mean when I'm at my most cynical I start thinking, hey, you folks pay me money to make all of us feel somehow that our faith is real. Please tell me that there's more to your faith than that. And the fact is we have our own traditions exactly in the same way that the Pharisees had theirs because we're no different than they are. I'm not suggesting that it's my job to give you all kinds of religious things to do in order to qualify as a Christian in good standing in the kingdom because there's nothing you can ever do to earn salvation that is totally a gift. *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* What Jesus is getting at here is that his children love with their hearts and not with their heads. When Christ has come into your life, he does a heart transplant, he doesn't do a head transplant, he doesn't do a brain transplant. And the new heart that he gives us wants first

and foremost to please him, not to just check off a bunch of boxes. I mean if you can go to church and then come home and scream at your wife and abuse your kids and nothing is telling you that something is wrong, you're living by your head, you're not living by your heart. The Pharisees thought they could play this type of game where you check off ideological boxes based on manmade rules that emphasize what you do rather than the person you are or are becoming. If you belong to Jesus, you're a new creature in Christ all the time, and that's reflected not just from 9:00 a.m. to noon on Sunday but every moment in between. You're being shaped and molded every single moment of every day into the image of Jesus Christ who just happened to be God in the flesh but also the loveliest human that ever walked the face of this planet. Jesus was full of the fruit of the Spirit, of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If you're being shaped and molded into his image, those very qualities are growing incrementally in you. And I can tell you what stops the growth of those things. It's the cul-de-sac known as "traditionalism." See the Pharisees never asked themselves am I becoming more loving, more kind, more patient, more joyful? Rather what they wanted to know, they wanted to just find out if they could be just a little bit more persnickety about adhering to their customs and their mores. They hid behind traditions that led them to believe they were healthy when they were actually sick and

dying. And any time we think we can check off an ideological box like our politics or our denomination or even our disgust or displeasure at the way the culture has fallen, any time we react in horror at the fact that all those around us are unceremonially unclean without realizing how unclean all of us are without Jesus, well then we're steeping ourselves in the very same tradition that the Pharisees did. Our traditions may not include ceremonial washing but it probably does include some type of group identity goodness that they all engaged in. I mean, we're conservative Bible-believing evangelicals, how can God not like us the best, right? When we do that we are -- quote -- *"making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."*

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that we have to live perfect lives both at home and at church, we don't and we can't because we're fallen, because we're sinners. We're a people called by God to be reflectors of his grace. And what Jesus was railing about against the Pharisees, the reason why he was referring to them as hypocrites is not because they fell, it's because they pretended that falling and sinning was for others and not for them. I mean they had the technical understanding all sewed up. They had every box checked. They didn't need to deal with their parents because the Pharisees had it all laid out for them. See, *these people*

honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me. Jesus said that he wants hearts that are open and honest, but that doesn't mean that you won't come home sometimes and blow it badly. But we have a difference here. You see, when we do fail, we're aware of it because we have the Spirit of God living inside us. Jesus was railing at the fact that they had lost the ability to see clearly their own failures and they covered it all up with technicalities and legalities that made it seem as if they were all righteous when they were not. I mean Jesus summed it all up beautifully in a story he told in Luke 18. This is what he said. He said: He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." I tell you what, I would much rather be the one beating my breast and, saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" than the one who rattles

off a long list of technical boxes checked and walks out of the temple unjustified and clueless. And the question that Jesus is asking each of us this morning is which one are you? Ask yourself that as we go to consider the cup.

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

This is the part that we call heads, heart and feet, where we try to have some kind of practical application of what it is we're trying to remember about the Lord Jesus Christ. And I remember I was once asked by somebody, they wanted to interview me, and I said, "Sure." They said, "What do you see your job, your primary job as pastor? What is the essence of your job?" Very simple for me, it was my job, it's my job, to grow your capacity to fall deeper and deeper in love with the Lord Jesus Christ. That's my job. That's what God's called me to do.

And so I've mentioned many, many times I mentioned this show *The Chosen*. I'd like to do something about that because I'll tell you why. Raise your hand if any of you have seen at least three episodes of *The Chosen*. Okay. I'd say almost half, I would say.

Now this is completely voluntary. Please don't do this if you don't feel -- raise your hand if it's not one of the best things you've ever seen in your entire Christian life. If you think it's the best or you think it's really excellent, raise your hand. If not -- okay. Great. I want to tell you why. You know I was speaking to somebody last night, they said, I had to watch three of them before I really got into the rhythm of what they were trying to do. And they watched all -- there's 16 of them now. There's going to be 64 of them eventually because the person who was putting this together said you can't do the life of Christ in an hour or two. At the very minimum it's 64 hours that they're doing.

And the reason why I am so big about this show is that my goal is for you to fall deeper in love with Jesus Christ and this is a tool to do that. It's not something -- I don't want you falling in love with actors or the circumstances but I what want you to fall in love with is what they're representing and that's something about who Jesus Christ is, and there's a lot of things in this presentation, this show that I've never given thought about before having to do with Jesus Christ. I'm not a weepy guy but lots of these shows I watch and it's got my weeping. And so I'm very used to Christian entertainment being schlocky and lousy, frankly. And so when somebody said, "You need to watch this," I said, "I don't know. It's going to be one of those things." The acting is

incredible. The approach is incredible and a lot of it is the fact that the guy who was running this thing obviously loves the Lord Jesus and wants to use this as an opportunity to spread that gospel.

So I have a trailer. The way this works, let me just explain to you. This is crowdfunded, so this is something that has never been done before. Individuals are paying for this to have this done. And so there's two seasons that are already done. Season one is finished, season two is finished, they're working on season three. They hope to have I think seven or eight seasons themselves. And so they're producing them right now. When they're finished, then they'll start showing what they are. But the idea is that you can now go and look at these. They're about an hour apiece. And you can access them whenever you want. You can watch them on your phone, you can watch them on your laptop, you can watch them on your TV screen. It's got a technicality that allows you to just throw it to your TV screen.

So given that, this is the trailer for season two which gives you a bit of a flavor for what's going on. Those of you that have seen it will recognize a lot of the scenes and the people in that. You want to show that? (video playing)

That's the fellow who's responsible for the entire thing. What he's saying there and what I would want to do -- again, this is part of the practical part of what we're trying to do and accomplish here, I would like you if you have your cell phone, if you would take it out and if you would just go to the app store, and on the app store, you can delete it if you think this is bogus, if you don't like it, that's perfectly okay. Just go to the app store because I can't tell you how many people that I have encouraged to watch this that have later said, "I am so glad you told me to watch this." But just go to the app store, pick out "The Chosen" and just download it. And then it's just sitting there on your phone. Then you can just hit that, you can watch it on your phone which I don't recommend because it's just a tiny little screen but young people seem to not care. I do, I can barely see. But it will throw it to your TV, it will throw it to your laptop. Just have it there so that you can start to watch and for me, I just think this is a practical way that I can basically do what I've been called to do which is to grow your love for Jesus. This is one of the best tools I've ever seen for that. So let's pray.

Father, I just again, I thank you for yourself. I thank you, Lord, that it's not a movie, it's not a technical thing that's wonderful and lovely in The Chosen, it's you, Lord, it's who you are and what

you have done and what you have accomplished. And so Lord, this morning practically speaking I just pray that all of us would just avail ourselves of this resource, that it would take us to places and understandings of who you are we might not have ever had before so that we can grow not just in our knowledge of you but in our love for you. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.