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

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**John Baptizes Jesus**

**Mark 1:1-5**

**Prayer:** *Father, again we thank you for your grace, we thank you for your goodness. I just think of the prayer that we just sang, Lord, to set apart this time for us and give us ears to listen. Father, we thank you that the cross is your gift to us. We thank you that your Spirit is that same gift and your word is that same gift. And we pray, Lord, as we open up your word this morning prior to receiving communion that you would again give us ears to listen, give us the presence of your Holy Spirit, make this of permanent value, we pray this Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, once again it's the first Sunday of the month, it's our communion service and we speak first of Jesus on the night before he died, meeting with his disciples, and there he's celebrating for the last time his Passover Supper. It's spoken of in Matthew 26. 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."* So what's happening is Jesus takes the bread, he takes the wine and he offers them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood and he asked the disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup so that they might symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. He then asked them to repeat this remembrance on a regular basis and this is what we're doing right now, this is what we call "the Lord's table." We celebrate it once a month, some people celebrate it every week, some people celebrate it once every year. We do it once a month and we do it by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross. We also examine our consciences, we ask God's Holy Spirit who is in us to convict us of sin and then we confess our sins, and then we participate 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 spent a long period of time going through the gospel of John. I think that we had 28 messages about the gospel of John. We're finished. And so we're going to start all over again. This time we're going to start with a brand new gospel. We're going to start with Mark's gospel. So let me just start at the very

beginning. This is *Mark 1:1-3*. It says: *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'*

Mark's gospel is different from Matthew's and from Luke's. Mark's gospel opens up with John the Baptist or speaking about John the Baptist and he is this herald who is making the way straight for a king. Back in the day, whenever a king traveled, he had what was essentially an advanced crew of people who were announcing that he was on his way while clearing away any debris that would make his travel difficult. Well, John's task was to prepare a way for the king and to begin this process of clearing away the debris that misunderstanding and sin had laid on the covenant that God had made with Abraham. John was a messenger and he was a messenger heralding a new way that this king was going to deal with the problem of sin. John was a bridge for the Old and New Testaments, and his focus as that bridge was on the need for repentance. Verse 4 of Mark's gospel says: *John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Now, baptism was an unusual thing in the Old Testament. It was usually reserved for Gentiles who were looking to forsake their past and take on Judaism itself. And for them the*

waters of baptism symbolized the washing away of the Gentile's past life, and as such, it was a rarity. It was not an often thing. Well, John takes this practice usually reserved for Gentiles and he now begins baptizing Jews. He's baptizing those who sense their need for cleansing and repentance. And he's literally preparing the way for this new Messiah who'd represent a brand new cleansing of sin along with a brand new baptism. And what connected the baptism of the Old Testament with the New Testament was this need for repentance.

So let's talk first of all about what repentance is. You wonder, okay, just what is repentance? Let me give you an analogy. Some of you may have heard this before but I think it bears repeating. Say you're having an argument with your spouse. You're in the car and you're arguing over directions and you're on the highway and you're absolutely certain that you know exactly where you're going, you're headed to New York City. Your spouse is convinced that you're going the wrong way. Of course you being the premiere navigator are convinced that she is wrong and that you are right, you are indeed heading to New York City. And so you pass a sign that says "New York City, 100 miles." And you tell your spouse, "See, I told you so." She says, "I still think you're going the wrong way." About an hour later you pass another sign and it says: "New York City, 150 miles." Uh oh. And you instantly realize that

she was right and you were wrong. You are indeed going the wrong way. So you apologize, perhaps profusely. I mean you genuinely feel bad for insisting that your way was the right way. But you haven't yet repented. You see, that only takes place when your wrongdoing is accompanied by a change in direction. You see, genuine repentance means admitting that you're wrong and then getting off the highway, turning around, getting back on going in the other direction. See, the problem is it's very easy to confuse sorrow with repentance, and these are two very different things. You know, many times people think that just because they're able to feel sorrow for sin that they've repented, but they haven't. You see, repentance is sorrow for sin and, and a determination to turn away from it.

During the Old Testament, baptism was a means of recognizing one's need for cleansing of sin and repentance. It was an acknowledgment that I'm a sinner in need of cleansing and forgiveness. But the only way for you to get forgiveness in the Old Testament, the only way for your sins to be dealt with was through the shedding of blood. Thousands of years before Christ was even born, God had painted this picture over and over again that forgiveness would not come without the shedding of innocent blood. And in the Old Testament, that blood came from animals who were of course innocent of sinning, incapable of sinning. Their shed blood was designed to

paint a picture of the ultimate sacrifice that God would one day send, and that is himself, come to earth to be the ultimate blood sacrifice. God made that clear in *Leviticus 17* that without the shedding of blood there's no forgiveness of sin. It says: *For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.* So blood sacrifice was the way but it wasn't just a form and a ritual that you had to go through in order to get your sins forgiven, it was always, always preceded by genuine repentance. And repentance was exactly what John's baptism was designed to demonstrate.

So at the start here of Mark's gospel, we find John, he's now at the height of his popularity, he's bringing masses of people to his baptism of repentance, and we find the story is basically told that all four gospels and each one of them gives a little piece of information that the other ones lack. So if you want to get the whole picture, you really have to flesh out Matthew, Luke, Mark and John to get the entire picture. But to set the stage, this is what Mark says in verse 5. It says: *And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.* Now there were actually two different groups of people who were attending John's baptism. There was this genuinely repentant group of Jews who were

there to seek cleansing from their sins and to demonstrate their repentance through water baptism. And then there was this other group. These were the religious leaders, and again, along with those religious leaders were those who were just curious to see what this baptizer was doing, folks who were there just to see what he was up to. I mean, these folks had no intention of undergoing baptism because they had no sense of their sin and therefore no desire for repentance in the first place. Luke's gospel expands on how John the Baptist treated this mixed crowd who had come to witness the baptism. He goes after them with a vengeance. This is *Luke 3:7: He said therefore to the crowds that came out to the baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham."* So here's John uttering the first of many warnings that Jesus took up in addressing the Jews. As you can see, many of them believed that their biological connection to Abraham was all that was necessary for them to be worthy of heaven. And you know, that's a belief that persists to this day.

A few years back I had a friendship with Jewish neighbor, a fellow who was in his mid-90's, and he needed help and he was looking for companionship, and it gave me the opportunity to share the gospel

with him, which he allowed, and which I did frequently. Time and time again, I would plea with him to be reconciled with God and time and time again he had this one line for me, he said, "I got the blood of Abraham flowing through my veins. If that's not good enough for God, then nothing's good enough." Well that's literally thousands of years after John's warning, and that attitude still persists. John tells the Jews that, hey, God could raise up children of Abraham from the rocks if he wanted to, and that what makes a child of Abraham is not genetics, it's genuine faith, and that faith always produces fruit. Then he goes on to demonstrate the practical outworking of what repentance really looks like. He says this in *Luke 3:9*, he says: *"Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."* And the crowds asked him, *"What then shall we do?"* And he answered them, *whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."* Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, *"Teacher, what shall we do?"* And he said to them, *"Collect no more than you are authorized to do."* Soldiers also asked him, *"And we, what shall we do?"* And he said to them, *"Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."* So to the crowd John is saying demonstrate your repentance by caring for the poor. To the tax collector he says, demonstrate your repentance by honest dealings,

and to the soldiers he says, demonstrate your repentance by refusing to extort from the people you are supposed to be caring for. And what he's doing here is exactly what he was insisting on when he said "*bear fruits, bear fruits in keeping with repentance.*" He's telling this people that it's not enough to simply recognize that you're not headed into New York City and that you're sorry. What he is telling them that you have to get off the highway, you have to head in a different direction, that genuine repentance is sorrow plus action.

Luke gives a more full account of how the crowd then turns its attention to John and how John is having none of it. Again, this is Luke 3:9-15. It says: *As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."* So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. That's Luke's gospel. Now Mark's gospel describes John and his baptism of Jesus this way, he says: *Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild*

honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." And again, Mark's account is really bear bones. It kind of needs to be fleshed out. And this time we look at Matthew's account of the same incident and we see that he gives us a little more information. Matthew 3:13 says: *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."* This is a public acknowledgment of Jesus's baptism by the triune God. I mean it's Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, this is the public beginning of what the world has waited centuries to unfold. And no longer would there be a baptism just of repentance, now there's going to be a baptism of the Holy Spirit. So Jesus is stepping out of the water and God himself rips open heaven itself to say how deeply he loves his Son. And the Holy Spirit takes on the form of a dove, a visible form and alights above Jesus, indicating the Spirit's empowerment. So there coming

out of the water is the eternal triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit all acknowledging Jesus's baptism. Things would never be the same and John's baptism would essentially no longer be necessary because now the Holy Spirit was coming to indwell all believers convicting them of sin, moving them to repentance. He would be the one empowering them to turn off the highway and start heading in a new direction. Jesus's baptism marked the end of thousands of years of the old covenant and the beginning of a brand new one. And as happens with any great change, it took a great deal of time to implement, and we see that as we look at the book of Acts.

The book of Acts describes an event that took place even after Jesus had been crucified and risen. There's this remnant of believers who are still laboring under John's baptism under the Old Testament sacrificial system. We read an account in Acts of one such confrontation that Paul had with these believers who had been baptized not in the Holy Spirit but by John's baptism. This is what took place in *Acts 19*, it says: *And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They*

said, *"Into John's baptism."* So here we have believers who are literally straddling the old and the New Testaments. They understood that they were sinners, they understood that they were in need of repentance, they had also accepted Jesus as Messiah but they still didn't fully understand that he was the ultimate sacrifice sent to eliminate the need for any other sacrifice. I mean these are folks who have fully repentant hearts, yet they still lacked understanding. They didn't quite get the difference between the old and the new covenants. And so Paul says to them in *Acts 19:4*, he says: *"John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus. On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."*

I hope all of us in this room have been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see for us it's a public identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Jesus, as the Lamb of God, was God in the flesh come to live the life that we were supposed to live except the difference is he lived it perfectly. And then he offered his life of perfect righteousness in exchange for our lives of sin. And so when we by faith give our lives to Christ, his perfect righteousness becomes our perfect righteousness and we're now able to stand before God clothed in his righteousness and not our own now worthy of heaven. Baptism for us

in the New Testament is a public declaration that you've placed your faith in Jesus Christ's ultimate sacrifice. We just had the privilege of having a baptism service. There we learned that baptism is really publicly announcing now I'm on his team, I'm no longer on the world's team.

As the elders begin distributing the bread, take some time, just consider the difference between John's baptism, the baptism of Christ, and your own baptism, because they're all part of God's unfolding plan. And of course while this is happening, consider also God's warning about taking communion. *1 Corinthians 11* says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* You know, I say this every month, I say how incredibly serious communion is and that to enter into it in an unworthy manner as to literally court disaster. God has killed people for that. I mean if you're not absolutely confident that you are a child of God, that you are a child of the King, if you haven't by faith trusted in Christ as your Savior, if you first need to be reconciled to your brother before you bring any

sacrifice to God's altar, then pass the elements on and do not take them. I often said no one's going to think you're weird or strange, they may in fact think you wise. But again, the enemy loves to have both sides of this taken care of and the other side of that is that making the mistake of thinking that I have to be flawless, I have to be absolutely perfect if I am about to receive communion, otherwise I'm unworthy, and that, too, is a mistake the enemy loves. You see, being a child of the King doesn't mean you don't sin, it doesn't mean that you do not fail, and what it means is that you've received a gift and that gift is salvation. It means that it's a gift that no one is capable of earning by being good. I repeat this quote every month. Hopefully you've got it memorized by now, because I think it encapsulates so much of what I'm trying to say. It's Dane Ortlund's quote, and he says, "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 if we fail, we understand that we are aware that we have sinned because we have God's Spirit now living inside of us. And so when we do sin and when we do fail, we grieve, we grieve as children who know we have a Father who longs to forgive us who wants nothing more than to do just that. God 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

you are spotlessly free of sin, it means that when we do sin, we recognize there's somebody up in heaven advocating for us, speaking for us, speaking on our behalf. *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 that's the key. The key is because we have Jesus's own righteousness, an alien righteousness that's not ours, it's his, given to us by faith, because we have his righteousness, we are now free to eat from his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Christ purchased for you. He lived the life that we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so that we could be made worthy. Now that we are worthy, we need to understand that gift that's been given to us. And so we want to spend a couple of moments just thinking about how much we appreciate and how much we need to praise God that we have the baptism of Jesus now instead of the baptism of John.

*1 Corinthians 11 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.*

I want to focus on two statements that were made at Jesus's baptism, one of them was made by Jesus, the other was made by John, and these two statements together encapsulate what the gospel is all about. And the first statement that I want to focus on takes place as Jesus is about to undergo his baptism. And again we have to reach out to Matthew's gospel for the details here and this is *Matthew 3:13*. It says: *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.* John's one of the very first persons to publicly recognize that Jesus is the Messiah and as such, he recognizes his own unworthiness to be baptizing Jesus, I mean, *"I need to be baptized by you and do you come to me?"* And in Mark's gospel it has John saying, *"After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie."* You see, John understood the nature of the conflict that attended Jesus' baptism. You see the act was inherently a recognition of a sinner's need for repentance. I mean for every other human being that walks the face of the earth it was a perfectly appropriate act, but for this one human being, on one level it was a highly inappropriate act because he was in fact the only human since Adam who was born sinless. And what differentiated Jesus from Adam was that at the very beginning of

his public ministry now at age 30, he had remained completely and absolutely sinless. I mean what's the point of baptism? What is the point of a cleansing from sin if you're sinless in the first place? Scripture says in *Hebrews 4*: *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.* So why would a sinless one consent to a ritual designed to showcase a desire to turn from sin? Verse 15 says: *But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* Then he consented. Well, the answer is twofold. I mean the first point is that God is a God of order. At the time of Jesus's baptism, he was still under the Levitical law. And as such, even though he was God himself, he would submit himself to everything required to be lawful. *Galatians 4* says: *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.* That's the first point. But the second point is why we worship Jesus in the first place. And that's because as our representative, Jesus was not sinless. In fact Jesus represented every sin that every human being has ever committed. See, in the Old Testament when a sacrificial animal was brought forth, the priest would take his hands and he would place his hands over the animal and he would do that to objectify and quantify the sins that were being offered for sacrifice. And he

would literally place those sins onto the head of the animal. This is exactly what Jesus was willing to do for us. He willingly became the Lamb of God, that sacrificial animal, a lamb, except that it wasn't just a single individual that he was willing to die for, it was every single one of his sheep from Adam until the very last sheep enters the sheepfold some time at the end of time. Every single sin that you and I have ever committed was both objectified and quantified and then placed on the head of the ultimate sacrificial lamb.

And that brings us to the second statement made at Jesus's baptism. It was made by John as he sees Jesus approaching. And John's gospel says: *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* Baker's New Testament Commentary points out that there's a comma there, if you look at the actual text, there's a comma after the word "behold" and there's a grammatical reason why there's a comma after that word "behold." See, John wasn't just saying, hey, look at this man who's the Lamb of God who's taken away the sins of the world. He's actually saying something much more profound. What he's saying is "behold!" "See." "Be amazed." Stop for a moment. Stop in your tracks and examine this, because what you see approaching me is no ordinary lamb looking to be redeemed from sin. This is the spotless Son of God who came to this planet to take on

our sin, and to pay for it. John is insisting that we let the impact of what Jesus has done for us set in. And again, this is a hopeless task because we humans just can't begin to grasp the enormity of what took place at the cross.

Just to explain, you know, a lot of times when I'm trying to share the gospel with folks, I start out by saying, you know, if you could design an instrument that could read evil, somehow like a Geiger counter reads x-rays, you might call it an evilometer, okay, and let's just add, this evilometer would be able to pinpoint time and place. I mean it's an imaginary invention, so you can make it do whatever you want. So let's say you have this evilometer and you turned it on today. Well, it would be reading at a certain level, a certain low level like a Geiger counter might read when it's not around some highly radioactive material. If, however, you were able somehow to go back in time because you've got a time machine as well, and you went back 2,000 years, you would notice the needle is starting to move. And if you got on a plane -- of course they didn't have many airports 2,000 years ago, but it's an invented story, so it doesn't matter. So you're on a 2,000-year-old plane and you fly to the Middle East. Now the needle is starting to move even more. Then you go to a place called "Golgotha" and somehow you make your way to the foot of the cross and the needle is pegging off the scale, in fact it's bending

itself because there on the cross is evil incarnate. The spotless Son of God is not nobly shouldering the burden of evil, he has become evil in our place. And the same Father God who split the heavens to declare his love for his beloved Son as God in the flesh now looks at his Son and sees sin in the flesh. *2 Corinthians 5* says: *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* And there hanging on the cross was all the evil that all of Christ's sheep had committed for all of time. And you see God for the thousands of years of animal sacrifices for sin, he didn't just snap his fingers and say, "Oh, it's done. Oh, it's gone." It doesn't work like that. God states categorically that animal sacrifices will never take away sins. It can only cover sins, it can't take them away. *Hebrews 10* says: *And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.* You see, those sacrifice, those daily sacrifices stood only to cover those sins postponing the time when God would finally deal with them. And that time became due and payable at the cross. Looking backward all the way to the Garden of Eden, we realize that God didn't eliminate wrath, he merely stored it until the appropriate time came to release it. God says in *Romans 2:5* that wrath not dealt with gets stored up to await an ultimate judgment. He says: *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's*

*righteous judgment will be revealed.* And God has declared that there's not one but two collective outward expressions of his wrath. Actually there's three if you want to include the flood. But one of them is going to take place at judgment day at the end of all things, and that's the one that Romans 2 is referring to. That's the one that's going to occur to all those who don't take refuge in Jesus. But there was another one. It took place 2,000 years ago outside the walls of Jerusalem. Somehow God was able to quantify and objectify all of the evil every single one of his sheep past, present and future would commit and encapsulate that evil, placing it all on the head of this one sacrificial animal that Jesus had become. People talk all the time about how painful crucifixion must have been. May I suggest to you that it was a pin prick compared to the spiritual agony that Jesus had to undergo. By having all of the collective evil of mankind from Adam until the very last of his sheep enters into the sheepfold, to have all of that objectified, quantified and placed into someone who never once in his entire life ever sinned. That represents a sacrifice for us that literally is beyond human comprehension.

As the elders begin to distribute the cup, I want to read to you Paul's words in *Ephesians 3*. This is what Paul says. He says:  
*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the*

*riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith -- that you -- here's the important part -- being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

What Paul is saying here is he's asking God to give the power, the strength, the enablement to grasp, to comprehend the height, the width, the breadth and the depth of the love of God in Christ.

What he's saying is that human brains are incapable of grabbing on to this. It doesn't compute. I mean in the very same way that our minds run out of gas when we're trying to comprehend the enormity of the universe, so too does our mind and our spirit run out of gas when we try to comprehend the enormity of the love of God in Christ as expressed on the cross. I mean all John could do, all John could do to express what he was feeling is as the approaching Jesus nears him, he says, "*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!*" All we can do is give thanks for something we can't even scratch the surface of, and that's the love of God in Christ Jesus. As the cup is being distributed, just meditate for a moment on what it cost Christ to rescue us.

*1 Corinthians 11:25 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 hearts, hands and feet. Hearts, hands and feet is just an attempt to give some practical understanding of what it means to remember Christ. And as we're looking this morning, we understand that the one requirement that bridges the gap between the Old and the New Testament baptisms is this requirement of repentance. What John stated quite clearly is that repentance is not just a willingness to feel bad, it's taking action. It's being willing to get on the highway and go in a different direction, and Jesus said the same thing over and over again. I want to just give you a brief little story, the story of Zacchaeus because it's a classic case in point.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector, that makes you one of the most hated people in all of Israel because he was a Jew, and his job was to extract money from his fellow Jews. And the way taxes worked back then was Rome would assign a certain district a monetary value, it would say, you need to collect x-amount of dollars, and anything above that you get to keep. And so the tax collectors were given authority to wreak fiscal havoc, on anybody to extract whatever kind of money you could. As long as Rome got its share, they

didn't care what you got. So people looked at tax collectors as fellow Jews who had turned on their brothers and sisters and were literally raping them financially. So they were hated people. And here's this fellow, Zacchaeus, who's a very successful tax collector. He's a crook. He's a traitor. It also says in scripture that he was a man of short stature. And he hears that there's going to be a -- Jesus is coming into town, there's going to be a big commotion and so he climbs up into a tree so he can get a better view. He's curious, idly curious. I don't know if you remember the song Zacchaeus was a wee little man and this wee little man climbs up into a tree and he sees this great crowd moving down the street and Jesus is in the crowd. And Jesus stops and he turns and he points at Zacchaeus, he says, "You, I want to have lunch with you today." Zacchaeus is blown away. He's astounded. And all the other people in the crowd, especially the other Jews, they're furious. Jesus, you don't get it, this guy is scum, he's pond scum. You don't want to eat with him, you know what he did? You know what he is? You know what he did? You know what he does? They're blown away that Jesus wants to have lunch with him. Well, Jesus goes and he has lunch with him. And in the process, salvation comes to Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus repents but his repentance is an example of what genuine repentance is. Listen to what *Luke 19* describes. It says: *And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.*

*And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."*  
*And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he is also a son of Abraham."* See, Zacchaeus didn't stop at his willingness to feel bad about his sin. He had become convicted by Christ but he responded in repentance by restoring fourfold anything that he had taken by fraud. See, his sorrow included a plan of restoration for all that he had defrauded.

So my take-away from this is to ask each of us how we fit into this story. I mean, have you had someone that you've ever sinned against? Have you been willing to feel bad about it? Perhaps you think that feeling bad about it is enough, but it's really not. See, what God is saying is that you need not just to feel bad in order to repent, you need to take action. Part of that action is to resolve perhaps this morning before you leave this place that someone that you have sinned against needs to see your repentance. If that's the case, ask God right now for the ability, for the power, for the grace to be able to make that happen. That delights God and it proves that salvation has come to your house. Let's pray.

*Father, I just want to thank you. I thank you for John and his baptism. I thank you for the baptism that we have, and I thank you for the link that bridges them both, and that is repentance.*

*Father, I pray that you would give us the gift of repentance. It's not just sorrow but it's a determination to change, a determination to go in a different direction. And Father, I know each and every one of us has things that we are sorrowful for, sins that we are sorry of, but I pray that you would give us more than just sorrow for those sins, a determination to repent of them, a determination to move in a different direction and to take what means is necessary to make sure that that repentance is real, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*