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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Pergamum

Revelation 2:12-17

Prayer: *Father, we thank you, we praise you and thank you for being the God to whom all worship is to be given, a God who is worthy of all worship. I just praise you and thank you for who you are and for the gifts that you've given to us. I thank you that we can still meet freely, that we can still open up your book and still learn from it and grow in it. So I pray as we do just that this morning, Lord, that we would have the presence of your Holy Spirit guiding us, directing us and making this of permanent value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well our text this morning is Revelation 2:12-17. It says: "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. "'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of

Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'"

Well you can tell things are not good when the opening lines of your message to the church is a threat, but it's really impossible to take Jesus' words in any other way. In fact Baker's New Testament Commentary points out that the Greek here is ordered in such a way as to emphasize the threatening tone of Jesus' statement to Pergamum. Literally the clause reads: "*(The words of him), the one who has the sword, the double edged one, the sharp one.*" And as he is done twice before in his letters to two other churches, Jesus clearly identifies the church that he's threatening along with his intimate knowledge of what's taking place there. And in this case Jesus says, "*I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is.*" Well there's literally a half dozen different interpretations of why Jesus calls Pergamum Satan's throne, from the Acropolis which was in Pergamum which looked just like a throne to the author of Zeus that dominated the city to the cult of Asklepios which was

basically turning Pergamum into a medical miracle center, kind of like Lourdes. And there were people who would travel from all over just to spend the night in the temple in Pergamum hoping that they would be touched by some of the snakes that lived there; in so doing, get healed.

Well the fact is we don't know exactly why Jesus referred to Pergamum that way. And what we do know and what very few people realize is that this earth is indeed Satan's temporary domain. This is where Satan rules and reigns. It's where Jesus has come down literally to do battle with him. We know from the moment that Jesus arrived in this planet, we knew Satan was on the run, he knew that Jesus was there and Jesus meant his eventual doom.

And so from the very beginning we find Satan trying to incite Herod to kill Jesus along with all the boy babies in the desperate attempt to wipe Jesus out as an infant. Time and again we see Jesus refer to Satan as his primary adversary, whether it's in his temptation in the desert or in his confrontations with the Pharisees, which he recognized their connection to him or when Jesus knew that the cross was absolutely imminent. And Jesus stated: *"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."* He said this to show by what kind

of death he was going to die.

So Jesus states, he sees -- literally says the ruler of this world has his headquarters more or less in the city of Pergamum. In spite of that, Jesus commends the church for holding fast and keeping his name even as one of their own, Antipas, gets martyred. And there's almost no information historically about who Antipas was. Tradition has it he was roasted alive inside a bronze bull and it's likely that he died for refusing to worship the emperor because only Rome had the ability to exercise capital punishment. It seems like history knows nothing of this man Antipas but God certainly does and his sacrifice has not gone unnoticed; some 2,000 years later we're talking about it.

Jesus doesn't hesitate to point out that which is good, that which is noteworthy in Pergamum, and the fact that they remained in the city where they were clearly under attack even to the point of death, this is something that Jesus applauded. It wasn't the pressure from outside that was causing havoc in Pergamum though, it was pressure from within. Jesus quickly switches from the good news to the bad by saying: *But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual*

immorality. So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

Well Balaam, Balak and Nicolai all represent the same thing. Darrell Johnson points out that both Balaam and Nicolai mean, the words themselves mean conqueror of the minds of the people, one in Hebrew, one in Greek. We know very little about the Nicolaitans and a good deal about Balaam and Balak because the scripture says next to nothing about Nicolai but it gives us a good deal of insight into Balaam and Balak. And yet because the meaning of their names are so similar, we just assume that their sin patterns were alike.

Balaam and Nicolai sought to steal the hearts and minds of the saints at Pergamum. And Pergamum is a church that's undergoing two different types of attack, I mean there's one from the outside largely due to Rome and their insistence on emperor worship as well as the attacks that they received from the Jewish community. And again, those attacks served only to strengthen the church and its resolve to resist but there was also some internal attacks, the ones characterized by Balaam and Balak putting a stumbling block before the sons of Israel.

And balaam and Balak are figures who actually need some explanation. Balaam was a gentile. He was someone who had a reputation as a seer or prophet. And Balak was the king of Moab who saw Israel advancing and conquering and so he thought he could hire Balaam in order to secure victory for the Moabites over Israel by hiring this guy Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam uniquely represented both an outside and an inside threat to Israel and by type to the church as well.

And so Balaam is approached by Balak, the king of Moab, and at first he wisely refuses his offer. But then the king, Balak, sends an even higher delegation to persuade Balaam to come curse Israel and so he mounts on his donkey and he sets off to Moab. And what took place next is one of the strangest events in the entire old testament. We find Balaam on his way to Moab and God sends an angel to stop him, literally to take his life. Balaam and his donkey come into a narrow space between two different vineyards where this angel awaits to take Balaam's life. The donkey sees the angel and it refuses to go any further, prompting Balaam to start beating the donkey and what follows can only be described as bizarre.

This is the story as recorded in *Numbers 22*. It says: *But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD took*

his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand. And the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the road. Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pushed against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall. So he struck her again. Then the angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you."

Now Balaam is not the least bit taken aback by the fact that a donkey is now speaking to him. What's amazing, he's far more upset that the donkey's made him look foolish. It says: And the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?"

Now the donkey starts speaking philosophically. He's trying to reason with Balaam about why he did what he did. And Balaam just engages him in the argument as if he's arguing with a neighbor instead of a donkey. *And he said, "No." Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face. And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times?"* Now, the angel starts defending the donkey. *"Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live."*

Well, as bizarre as this encounter is, it points out what I've said repeatedly and that is there are two distinct kingdoms and they're operating simultaneously. Here we see the kingdom of earth and the kingdom of heaven and there's considerable overlap between these two kingdoms and only on the rarest of occasion do we get to glimpse these two kingdoms interacting and the results are both comical and terrifying. It says: *Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back."* And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go

with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you." So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak.

So Balaam goes on and he meets with Balak the king and instead of cursing the nation he winds up through a series of oracles blessing them, much to the dismay of Balak. But you see, Balaam wasn't finished with Israel just yet. And you have to understand, Balaam is nothing more than a hired gun. This is someone whose services were available to the highest bidder, but those services couldn't affect the future that God had already preordained. Israel was going to defeat Moab and all the others no matter what prophet was hired to curse them.

But Balaam wasn't finished in his attempt to wreak havoc on Israel. I mean, his outward attempts failed miserably because God had given Israel strength and protection. It was his inward attacks that were most successful, and Balaam the hired gun was part and parcel of that inward attack. Numbers, Deuteronomy, Hosea, Joshua and Psalms all refer to an incident that took place in what they call Baal Peor. "Baal" simply means "lord," and "Peor" was the opening that Balak and Balaam used when they spied on Israel. And it's at the lord of the opening where this successful attack on Israel was launched. And what happened there, what's referred to as the incident at Baal Peor was that Balaam used the Midianite women and

their sexual worship to seduce Israel into abandoning God for the Midianite gods. *Numbers 25* says: *While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them.*

Well, this is the first time that Israel had basically given of up God for a false god through the lure of sexuality and it would not be the last. And in response God sends a great plague to Israel. In fact in the New Testament Paul refers to this incident in *1 Corinthians 10*. He says: *We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.* You see, what an external threat from the military couldn't do, an internal threat of sexual indulgence accomplished without firing an arrow. The Midianite women brought wholesale worship of their gods to Israel and that worship included sexual debauchery. And the mastermind behind it all was Balaam. And it wasn't like Balaam was some kind of ideologue; like I said, he was nothing but a hired gun.

Jude in the New Testament identifies false teachers pointing out that it was greed and money that caused Balaam to seduce Israel.

Jude says: *Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.* Jude goes on to describe the fate of those like Balaam by saying of false teachers: *These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.* Well, such was the fate of Balaam.

Balaam and Nicolai had successfully attacked the church of Pergamum from within using sexuality as their weapon of choice. And over 2,000 years later it's the exact same weapon that's being used today. I mean we might not import sex directly into our worship as the Midianite women did but if you look at our corporate entertainment, you might assume that to be so.

Just last week I was watching the Super Bowl with a young man from the Netherlands who was watching it for the very first time and I was sort of explaining the game to him. When it came time for half time to come near, I told him, you're about to see the largest corporate worship service in the world. And he looked at me like what? I explained to him that the Super Bowl half time show is

America's corporate worship service. It's where everything that our culture values and cherishes is put on display. And sure enough it was exactly what I expected. A little tamer this year but something I think the Midianites would really appreciate. See, sexuality dominates our culture like never before, and whether it's LGBTQ issues or gender confusion or even abortion, things related to sexuality wind up dividing the church.

Churches today have three different options when it comes to issues of sexuality that surround our culture. The first is cultural capitulation; the second is to simply keep your head down; the third is to speak the truth in love. And there are lots of churches that go with option number one which is cultural capitulation. I mean why struggle with being considered backwards, why struggle with being considered primitive, why get labeled as haters when all you have to do to get along is just go along? I mean it's clearly the direction that most mainstream denominations have gone to when it comes to areas of sexuality. And quite frankly, lots of them do so out of conviction on their part, that the word of God is fluid, that it's changeable and that culture itself can change scripture.

Well the second group makes up a large swath of the evangelical church. Their view is just keep your head down, don't get involved

in politics, don't get involved in cultural battles and hope that eventually the whole thing just blows over. The problem is these issues are not going to blow over. And a large part of the church's role is to answer the question that everybody asks in the back of their mind: How should we then live? How do I translate a 2,000-year-old document into the way I live my life today? And pretending that the world that exists outside of the doors of the church is not relevant is like a shepherd thinking the wolves will just go away if we don't think about them or ignore them.

Well, the third option is to just speak the truth in love. And recently I came across an excellent example of group one and group three thinking and how it plays itself out. Group one thinking is cultural capitulation and you can say it's epitomized by the article that I saw in *The Christian Post*. It's an article about a famous Christian pop singer. This is the article.

It's entitled: Amy Grant defends decision to host same-sex wedding: 'I love those brides' by Ryan Foley, Christian Post Reporter. He says: "Popular contemporary Christian singer Amy Grant has defended her decision to host a same-sex wedding at her farm after some Christian leaders criticized the move as an endorsement of sin. Grant, well-known for singing contemporary Christian hits such as 'Mary Did You Know' and 'Breath of Heaven'

in addition to mainstream pop music, reacted to the backlash she has received for her decision to host her niece's same-sex wedding in a statement to People Magazine published Monday. 'I never chase any of those rabbits down the rabbit hole,' she said. 'I love my family, I love those brides. They're wonderful, our family is better, and you should be able to be who you are with your family, and be loved by them,' Grant added. The singer described the wedding as her family's first 'bride and bride' nuptials and saw her niece's sexual orientation as 'a gift to our whole family to just widen the experience of our whole family.' She explained that she viewed her support for the LGBT community as consistent with the fact that Jesus 'narrowed it down to two things: love God and love each other.'"

Well there you go, just go along and you will get along, that's for sure. Well, that response was met by a third group response by a man who has taken an enormous amount of flak for that response. And his response was noted in the very same article which said: "Noted Christian leaders reacted to Grant's plans to host the same-sex wedding. Franklin Graham, CEO of Samaritan's Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, took issue with Grant's interpretation of Christian teaching in a Dec. 18 Facebook post. 'Yes, we are to love God and love each other. But if we love God, we will seek to obey His Word,' the son of legendary evangelist

Billy Graham wrote. 'Jesus told us, "If you love Me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).' God defines what is sin, not us; and His word is clear that homosexuality is sin. We have all sinned, and in order to have a relationship with God and spend eternity with Him in Heaven, we must turn from our sin and put our faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, who came to earth to die for our sins. The Bible says, 'Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out,' (Acts 3:19). Graham stressed that 'for me, loving others also means caring about their souls and where they will spend eternity.' He also highlighted the importance of 'loving people enough to tell them the truth from the Word of God,' adding, 'The word of God is something we can never compromise on.'

I have to tell you, you read the comments of both people commenting on these comments and you have to understand, Graham is considered by a whole lot of people to be absolutely loathsome in their view. I can tell you Graham speaks as someone who anticipates meeting the living God who said to the church at Pergamum: *I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.*

Well we've certainly seen, we've certainly felt the pressures of this culture's sexual immorality.

But what about foods sacrificed to idols? Well, there too we find cultural capitulation. Back then that was accomplished by offering meats that had been offered to idols. I mean, to share a meal with somebody back then meant a lot more than it does in our culture.

Darrell Johnson observes, he says: "People in that day would bring an animal to the temple of their favorite god. Part of the animal would be offered to that god and part was given back to the worshippers so that they could hold a sacred feast in honor of that god. When people became Christians, when they said yes to Jesus Christ as God, they faced a major dilemma. Friends and members of their families who had not yet come to Jesus would invite them to join them in the feasts. 'Should a disciple go? And should she or he eat?' became major social-spiritual issues." (Johnson, Darrell W.. *Discipleship On The Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation* (p. 81). Canadian Church Leaders Network. Kindle Edition.)

Now what might seem confusing was Paul's advice that he gave to the Corinthian church. I mean, Paul told them that meat that was for sale in the marketplace, that was free to be bought and consumed knowing that the meat had first been offered up to idols. Paul

says we know that idols are nothing and meat offered up to nothing is of no consequence. But Paul cared a great deal about the consciences of weak and new believers who may not have had that kind of level of understanding. Paul cared very little if you purchased meat that had previously been offered up for pagan sacrifice but was now sold on the open marketplace, but he cared a great deal about meat offered up under the banner of a special blessing from a false god. He said have no qualms about eating meat sold in the marketplace with an unbeliever but if that meat is advertised as being specifically blessed by a false god, if you're invited to a meal in order to celebrate a false god, do not go there.

This is what he said. He said: *Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. For "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience -- I do not mean your conscience, but his.*

Well we're not facing that same issue that Paul faced today. So what form of cultural capitulation are we tempted with? Well, there's actually so many it's very hard to quantify them. Better to understand our circumstances in terms of these two different worlds that we've been speaking about repeatedly.

I've said it over and over again, there are two different kingdoms. There's the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of earth; you're either in one or you are in the other. And our tasks as members of the kingdom of light, it's stated very clearly in *1 Peter*. This is what he says, he says: *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

So what he's saying is we as a people and as a church, we've been called out of the darkness from one of those kingdoms into his marvelous light and he says for what? Well, to proclaim the excellencies of the one who called us. That's what we're called on to do.

You know, there's not a new person that I don't meet that I don't think or wonder instantly what kingdom is this person from? I mean if he's not from the kingdom of light, I can usually ascertain that within a couple of minutes. And by the same token my thoughts are then is how can I proclaim the excellencies of him who called me out of the darkness, how can I proclaim that to him? That's basically what Jesus is expecting from all of his churches. I mean when you think about it, Jesus' assessment of these churches, it gives real flesh and real blood to what's often thought of as theoretical or theological. We have find out the church at Ephesus, it was just going through the motions. They've lost their first love. We find out that Smyrna is getting beaten up in every which way, and now Pergamum is getting beaten from without by worship from Rome and compromised within by worship of sex and cultural compromise. And Jesus tells them: *"Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth."*

Well Jesus is talking about a third enemy. A third enemy that they would have to deal with and it would be far worse than the first two. It wouldn't be the political oppression of Rome, it wouldn't be the sexual and cultural compromise that was sucking the life out of them, it would be Christ himself coming against them with the sword. Remember the double-edged one, the sharp one? And over

against that threat Jesus offers a promise as well. He says: *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it."*

Well, as one author puts it when it comes to the white stone there are at least nine different interpretations of this passage, all of which have some merit. Nobody really knows. They also know a white stone was given in court as a sign of acquittal in a case as opposed to a black stone which meant guilty. To put that in context, we said Jesus was God himself taking on human flesh, living a perfect life and then taking that perfect life to the cross so that he might offer it up as a substitute for my life of sin, so that by faith in his resurrection I can claim his righteousness as my own and stand before a holy God not holding onto the black stone of guilt but now having the white stone of acquittal. Well, that's one possible answer.

Another popular possibility was what was called the *tessera hospitalis*. A white stone would be divided in two and it would be inscribed with the names of both parties and it would symbolize the friendship that they had as the stone would only become whole as it was put back together when both parties were once again back

together.

I mean, no one knows for certain what the white stone means but what it clearly points to is something astounding. You see, Christ himself is offering us a level of intimacy that you might find in a spouse or in the dearest of friends. And he says I'm giving each of you a brand new name known only to you and to me, meaning that we are being offered a level of intimacy that's deeper than anything you could possibly imagine, a level of intimate personal friendship of love and love with the King and the Creator of the universe.

He goes on to say that he's also going to offer us hidden manna. Well hidden manna is simple enough, I mean, Jesus has told us over and over again the greatest gift that he has for us is the gift of himself. It is the most important, the most life giving gift you could ever receive, and every communion Sunday we repeat this statement. It 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."* And Jesus goes on to say: *"Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father*

sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." So the hidden manna is Jesus himself and that's what he's offering us.

You know, I despair of trying to even describe the value of this gift. Some of you have had a spectacular experience where God has met you and brought you to a level that you can't even begin to describe and I know because I had such an experience fifty years ago this May. I mean in an instant I knew that God was everything I could ever want and need and that all those things that had ever comprised any other thoughts and desires were instantly swept away by the power of that connection. Take any other experience that you've had on this planet, take the greatest joy, the greatest intimacy, the greatest pleasure, the greatest satisfaction and sense of well-being that you could possibly imagine and multiply it a hundredfold along with the certain knowledge that you're now embracing with every single molecule of your being everything you were ever created for and you get a sense but only a sense of what Jesus is offering us here. That's what the hidden manna is.

I don't know if you've been following the news of late but there's a lot of news lately about the revival breaking out. News in

particular about breaking out at one particular Christian college, Asbury University in Kentucky. You may have wondered what is taking place there. NBC, ABC, CBS, all of them are talking about it. This is an NBC news article on it written a couple of days ago. It says this: "A nonstop Kentucky prayer 'revival' is going viral on TikTok, and people are traveling thousands of miles to take part. The gathering has been going on for 24 hours a day at a small Christian college. A Christian service at a college chapel. In Kentucky has ballooned into a nonstop prayer and worship session that some are calling a 'revival' - and people are traveling thousands of miles to take part in it after seeing viral videos on TikTok."

I've just seen lately, I just saw last night they had thousands and thousands of people. They have security tents set up, they have cameras that are inside so they can show to legions of people who are standing out in the freezing cold and the snow, some having come from South America, some having come from all around the world just to get near what's going on here.

It says: "The growing event started as a routine chapel service." It says, "The setup is simple. No projector screens or high-tech integrations, just wooden sanctuary chairs filled with people, and an open altar call with an invitation to prayer that still hasn't

ended." It's been going on for ten days now. "That equation has been a powerful recipe on social media. On TikTok and Instagram, videos hashtagged 'Asbury Revival' are racking up millions of views. At the time this article was published, the hashtag #asburyrevival had 24.4 million views on TikTok. Many attendees of the Asbury gathering say they were drawn by a spiritual presence they felt was at the event."

Now I have to tell you right off the bat, I have no idea if this is genuine or not; I do not. And I know how important it is to exercise discernment and test the spirits as John tells us. He says in *1 John 4:1: Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.*

And so the testing is ongoing right now. There's a lot of interesting things going on but I have some thoughts about what is taking place here. First of all, do you know what 24 million TikTok views represents? I think it represents a deep and abiding

hunger that is out there in a culture that is facing imminent collapse. Someone asked me, what are they do -- what do you -- how do you spend three days at a prayer service? What are they doing there? I said, if you ever got a taste of God such as I got some fifty years ago, you would be instantly hooked, you would be instantly hooked, you'd be wanting nothing but more and more of that taste of God because it's the one taste that we were created and designed for. It's the one taste that history records over and over again people willing to crawl over broken glass just to get an experience of.

But here's the most amazing fact of all. This deep abiding hunger that drives people to fly to Kentucky from all over the world just to try to experience is for something that's already been given to you and me. It's something we already own. We have the hidden manna that this world is desperately longing for and doesn't even know it. You see, they've been eating pig slop and they've been eating the pig slop this world offers for years now and they're starving. And the way this reported revival is growing, at the very least it's an indication that this world is ripe and ready for a change in diet.

Well the question that it raises for each of us is are you ready to be part of the process? Again *1 Peter* says: *But you are a chosen*

race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. That's who we are, and that's what we do. Let's pray.

Father, I just thank you. I despair of being able to describe the value of the gift we possess already. I can point to people flying from Brazil, from South America, from all over the world desperate for what we already own. Lord, I just -- I fear that we think very little of this gift because we've owned it for so long. I just pray, Lord, that this revival is a genuine one and that it spreads and that it catches fire and that we see this entire country turn its heart and its mind and its face towards you. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.