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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

February 3, 2019

The Women at the Tomb

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, I just want to come before you this morning, again it's that time, it's the first Sunday of the month, the time where we spend time focusing on you, on the cross and what you've done for us. I want to pray this morning, Lord, as we open up your word, that you would again speak to us, speak by the power of your Holy Spirit, give us the ability to enter into some aspect of what you have done there for us and that it may be of permanent value and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, Jesus on the night before he died, met with his disciples to celebrate a Passover meal, his last Passover meal. We look at *Matthew 26*, which describes it, it says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day*

when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." And so Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and blood, then he asked the disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. We repeat that on a monthly basis, and that's what we call the Lord's table, and we celebrate it by meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus has done for us on the cross, by examining ourselves, by asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sins, by confessing those sins, and then by participating in the elements. *John 6:53* says: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Well, as you know, we've been working our way through the Gospel of John and we've just about finished the 19th chapter and just to kind of reiterate where we were last time, when we were looking at what happened immediately after Jesus died, we saw that Jesus was spared the indignity of having his legs broken because the scriptures had predicted it. *John 19:36* says: *For these things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones shall be broken."* And we recognize that it was because Jesus was the perfect Passover lamb, that God had given instructions that the original Passover lamb should not have its bones broken, so Jesus also would not have his bones broken. Instead, *one of the*

soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. So we wondered why John would spend four whole verses describing what is essentially a physiological effect. And we know that John was dealing with the docetic heretics, these are a group of people who believe that Jesus never really took on flesh and that he simply gave the appearance of that, and we know that John wants them to know that Jesus' death was real and that it was flesh and blood and as bloody a death could be, but he also wants us to know that there's a picture Jesus' pierced side is presenting. There was deep symbolism in the blood and the water that was flowing from Jesus' pierced side. It represented the Holy Spirit of God who would enter into every single one of his children and there inside them become a wellspring that would flow out of them as they shared the gospel. Jesus had said if we believed in him, we, too, would have this living water coming out of us. This is what he said in *John 7:37*: He said, "*Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, 'Rivers of living water will flow from within them.'*" By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

So we spoke about the possibility of being either a dam or an aqueduct when it comes to passing on this living water of God's Holy Spirit that's inside of us. And we mentioned what usually

stops the flow of the spirit is fear. And it just struck me that fear has been a topic that has popped up again and again in our study of the life of Christ as well as in our study of the book of Esther. We looked last time at John's description of two men who had known -- who were known more for their fear than for their courage and this is John's description of the crucifixion and his description of that fear. This is *John 19:38*. It says: *After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.*

Well, I mentioned this last time, I said, there's no question that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus both had succumbed to fear. Joseph was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, but clearly he was someone who kept his mouth shut when he could have opened it. And Nicodemus, the scripture points out, came to Jesus late at night

because he was afraid to be seen. I mean, a prominent teacher of the law coming to this unschooled, illegitimate Jesus of Nazareth, that would never do. And so we note that both of them had allowed their fears to overwhelm them and so both kind of contributed to abandoning the savior while he was alive. It wasn't just limited to them. I mean, we know that Peter's fear led him to deny his savior three times. And the amazing thing is that the Savior knew exactly what was going to unfold. Peter's boast that he would never ever leave Jesus came after Jesus quoted the prophet Zechariah on the night before he died telling his disciples that every last one of them was going to abandon him. I mean Jesus made that prediction right after the Passover meal that I read about at the beginning of our service. You know, he reads that passage, the meal ends, and Jesus takes his disciples out to the Mount of Olives and they sing a hymn and then it says: *Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'"* Sure enough, shortly after, Judas leads this contingent of soldiers into the garden. The scripture says in *Matthew 26: Then all of the disciples forsook Him and fled.*

Now, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, they were not even disciples, but they were the first to repent. I mean they had let fear get the best of them. But in Jesus' death, they somehow found

their courage. *Mark 15* says: *Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting to the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.* It was no simple task for Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea to undertake this because for them there's really no going back from asking for the body of Jesus. So we see that Jesus's living water had really found its mark in them. We also see that God is so loving and so gracious that he even ministers to his own during his death. And so we find out in scripture that Jesus, God is reaching out to each and every one of the disciples that abandoned Jesus, offering them forgiveness and grace. I mean, Joseph of Arimathea conquered his fear in asking Pilate for the body of Jesus and Nicodemus joined him in what they knew or at least what they thought was an essentially hopeless task. I mean, Jesus was dead. They had the task of removing the nails, taking down the body and feeling Jesus's flesh turn cold. They were serving a dead Messiah. You know, fear can make us do that as well.

And as the elders distribute the bread, I would like us to take a moment to consider what role does fear play in my life and how I live it for Christ. I want us to have that on our mind as we're considering God's warning about taking communion. We read this each time. This is *1 Corinthians 11:28*, it says: *But let a man*

examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. We read this passage each month because we recognize how serious communion actually is and that there's a real danger in entering into it in an unworthy manner, you're literally courting disaster. And so we ask if you're not absolutely confident that you are a child of the King, if you haven't by faith trusted in Christ as your Savior, perhaps you first need to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you bring this sacrifice to the altar, then just don't participate. Just pass the elements on and as I say each time, no one's going to think less of you for that. But I also mention the fact that you can make a mistake on the other side, you can make the mistake of thinking, well, I have to be perfect. And if I'm not spotlessly perfect, I'm unworthy to receive communion and the devil loves that mistake as well. You see, being a believer, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin, it doesn't mean that you don't fail, it means that you recognize the salvation that you have received is a gift that no one is capable of ever earning by being good. I quote this each time, Dane Ortlund: "In the kingdom of

God the one thing that qualifies you is knowing you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." It also means that when we fail, we're aware of the fact that we fail because God's Spirit is inside of us, and it's God's Holy Spirit who is convicting us. And so we grieve because we understand that we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us, a Father who says in *1 John 1:9*: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So being a child of the King doesn't mean that we are sinless and spotless, it means we also understand that we have an advocate with the Father, someone who is up in heaven speaking on our behalf. *1 John 2:1* says: *My dear children, I write this to you so you will not sin, but if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* You see, it's because we have the righteousness of Christ and not our own, that's why we are free to eat from his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased for you. He lived the life that we were supposed to live and died the death we deserved to die in our place so that we could be made worthy of heaven, so that we could have this particular privilege. He also did that so that we could conquer our fears. So take a moment and just ask yourself, where is fear in my Christian life?

1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter, 23rd verse says this: *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

Of all the agonies that Jesus had to undergo for us at the cross, his abandonment must have been particularly painful. Jesus was utterly alone. And the very ones who had deserted him were the ones he had poured his life into every single day for three years. And he went through the beatings, he went through the mockings, he went through the flogging knowing that just as he said they would, the sheep had scattered leaving the shepherd alone to face the wolves. Jesus cries out to his Father in *Psalm 22*: *"Be not far from Me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help."* He's calling to his Father but there's no help that can come from his Father. Jesus is now assuming the moral rot of those he has come to rescue. The spotless Son of God is no longer spotless. The prophet *Isaiah* in the very heart of the Old Testament tells us exactly why that is. He says: *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* Your sin and my sin have been placed on the head of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb. God's holiness, that is his perfection, has no choice but to completely forsake what

Jesus has now become. Jesus is forced to cry out: *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent. But You are holy, enthroned in the praise of Israel."* God is indeed holy and Jesus right now is not. He's been abandoned by his Father because his Father's holiness demanded it, and by his disciples, because their fear induced it. But as Jesus works his way towards calvary, he sees that he's not completely alone. This is Luke 23:27, it says: *And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!'" For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?"*

Jesus makes his way up to Golgotha where he's nailed, hands and feet to a tree, and as he hangs there, he sees that he is not completely alone. One of his disciples, the author of the gospel of John has joined a group of people who are now gathered at the foot of the cross. John 19:25 says: *Now there stood by the cross*

of Jesus His mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Now once again, Jesus is on the cross but he's not thinking of himself, he's thinking of his mother. He transfers the care of his mother to John. He says: When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing by, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. So having completed this final task, Jesus then moves to the final phase of giving up his spirit. And only after he dies do Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea screw up the courage to attend to his body to prepare it for burial. Now I don't want to minimize the courage that it took Joseph to approach Pilate and ask for Jesus's body, I mean, that was an extraordinary measure and it was quite costly. I mean, Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin. This was the very body that had condemned Jesus. So he had to know there was no going back at all. Joseph had cast his lot finally with Jesus. And he along with Nicodemus went to anoint Jesus's body to prepare it for burial, but those two were not alone. They were accompanied by a group of people who had never given in to fear. Luke's gospel says this: The women who had come with him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment. Luke's gospel goes on to

tell us: *On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.*

Each of the four gospels brings us a slightly different picture of Jesus Christ and his ministry as Lord and Savior, and so each author emphasizes different things, so sometimes you have to look at all the gospels to get a complete picture of who was at the tomb ministering to Jesus's body. You see, in addition to Joseph and Nicodemus who took Jesus's body down from the cross and actually laid him in the tomb, we have this large list, a fairly large list of people who ministered to him the following day. I mean, so far we know there was -- quote -- *"the women who had come with him from Galilee"* and we know that included Mary Magdalene. *John 20:1* says: *Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.* Well, Mark's gospel adds this, it says: *Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices, that they might come and anoint him.* Luke's gospel says: *It was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them.* So putting all of these together, we find that there was a group of women that included Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome and Joanna. These four women came to the tomb to anoint Jesus's body. And again considering the

circumstances, they were taking quite a risk. And so were the women who were publicly lamenting and weeping for Jesus as he made his way up the hill. You know publicly identifying with someone being crucified by the Jews as an enemy of God and by Rome as an enemy of the state required a courage that seemed not to be possessed by men who, as Jesus had predicted, had all scattered save John who came back, but women. I mean if anything stands out about Jesus's final hours in the time immediately after his death, it's that loyalty, courage and taking action was something that seemed to have been divided among the sexes. The women of Jesus's day stepped forward at the most critical time. The men, as Jesus had predicted, all headed for the hills. Why do you suppose that was? Well let me suggest three reasons.

Reason number one, as I say, when you ain't got nothing, you got nothing to lose. It is hard to describe to our culture just how low on the cultural totem pole women were in Jesus's day. Women in Jesus's day had nothing to lose. Zhava Glaser in *Jews for Jesus* newsletter wrote this, says:

"Women were not allowed to testify in court. In effect, this categorized them with Gentiles, minors, deaf-mutes and "undesirables," such as gamblers, the insane, usurers and pigeon-racers" -- I don't know why pigeon-racers -- "who were also denied

that privilege. Customarily, even a woman of stature could not engage in commerce and would rarely be seen outside her home. If a woman was ever in the streets, she was to be heavily veiled and was prohibited from conversing with men. In Talmudic times, respectable women were expected to stay within the confines of the home. The terminology for a prostitute was 'one who goes abroad.' The women of the first century did not even do her own shopping, except possibly to go out, accompanied by a slave, to buy material which she would use to construct her own clothing at home! The women with whom Jesus spoke were very likely illiterate, since the rabbis did not consider it incumbent upon women to learn to read in order to study the Scriptures. Based on the passage in Deuteronomy 4:9 'Teach them to thy sons,' the rabbis declared women to be exempt from the commandment to learn the law of Moses. Indeed, the Talmud says, 'It is foolishness to teach Torah to your daughter.' Women were separated from men in private, public and religious life. They could go to the Temple, but could not venture beyond the confines of the Women's court. One Talmudic passage perhaps best sums up the situation of women at the time of Christ: '(They are) swathed like a mourner (referring to the face and hair coverings) isolated from people and shut up in prison.'"

See, women in Jesus's days, they were non persons. And Jesus's own disciples often gave evidence that they, too, were products of that

culture. Every time that Jesus reached out to women and every time he regarded them as persons, his disciples were either amazed or shocked and appalled. And if you remember Jesus's conversation with the woman at the well, Jesus is hot and he's tired and he's sweaty and he goes to sit down at the well and he notices there's a woman there and he strikes up a conversation with her asking her if she would get him a drink. Men in those days, they just didn't do that. And Jesus who was never driven by any culture paid no attention whatsoever to the rules governing interactions with women. But we see that the one who was the most astounded in this gesture was the woman herself who said in *John 4:9*: "*How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.*" His disciples had gone into town to get some food and they return and they find him, he's actually speaking to a woman. In John's gospel it says: *At this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"*

On another occasion Jesus was approached by the Canaanite woman whose daughter was demon possessed and she approaches Jesus and she's begging for mercy and Jesus is drawing her faith out even further and he responds with absolute silence. The disciples respond as well, their response is tell Jesus to tell her to get

lost. I mean, they think it's an absolute embarrassment that anyone would even dare, as a woman, to be speaking to a man. *Matthew 15* says: *And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O LORD, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon possessed."* But He answered her not a word. And his disciples came and urged Him, saying, *"Send her away, for she cries out after us."* You know, both of these women encounter a Jesus who doesn't play by any of the cultural rules that they had grown up with. In both cases the encounter is life-changing. I mean, one of the primary reasons why it was women who were willing to identify with Jesus was that he treated them as the persons they were. Secondly, he gave them something that men already had as a matter of course, and that is dignity and value as well as personhood. But thirdly, he didn't treat them like men. He treated men and women differently. I mean, he sharply rebukes Peter for his lack of faith and yet when Mary, Lazarus's sister, demonstrates her lack of faith, he not only comforts her, he begins to weep with her. See, Jesus was quite comfortable, recognized that men and women were uniquely different in their giftedness. I mean after all, he's the author of creation, he's the one who introduced this idea of binary complementarity to the world. And binary complementarity is just a fancy way of saying that there is really only two genders, male and female, and they are uniquely linked. *Genesis 1:27* says: *So God*

created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. You know, the one phrase that you hear bandied about all the time now with regard to gender is the word "non-binary." "Binary" simply means something based on two. In this case we're talking about male and female. Non-binary is a rejection of the two genders that God has established for what at last count has become over seventy different genders. There's a biblical term for that. It's called folly. 1 Corinthians 3:19 says: For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness." See, the wisdom of this world completely rejects the idea that a man and a woman were designed to compliment one another such that only together could they make one complete whole. You have to remember, it was Jesus who made them male and female. He was the author of creation. Genesis 2:20 says: So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

God is describing the binary male and female becoming a unity of one flesh through what we call marriage. That, too, has become the subject of the folly of this world's wisdom. Believing that marriage should only be between a man and a woman now makes you officially a bigot and a hater. But this presents a much bigger problem, and that is that anyone who takes the scriptures seriously would have to describe Jesus also as a bigot and a hater. I mean after all, Jesus selected twelve disciples as leaders of his church and it was no accident, every one of them was a man. God saw them constitutionally as more fitted for that task, more fitted than the women who Jesus did not select. That didn't make them better or worse, didn't make anybody better or worse, it simply made them different. I mean God saw women constitutionally and physically as more fitted to the task of giving flesh to God himself, of nurturing Jesus through his infancy up to the time when he became a young man. I mean, you could certainly argue that the highest privilege a human being could ever have would be granted the ability to give flesh to God himself. God chose women alone for that privilege. You know, no male had anything whatsoever to do with the incarnation of Christ. It involved a human female named Mary, and the power of the Holy Spirit together, they formed a

human zygote that developed into the baby that was born on Christmas day. It was the male of the species who was clearly and absolutely excluded from the process of making the word of God into flesh. And something tells me that in the pantheon of things that are honorable, partnering with God himself to make his word become flesh is about as honorable as you could get. The problem with our culture and our society is that it places great value on the roles that God's given to men and very little value on the roles he's given to women. And if you buy into this culture's values, you wind up thinking that God has shortchanged women and unfairly blessed men. And only time and eternity is going to prove how silly an idea that is. I mean, God made men and women constitutionally different. Not better, not worse, but different. And when I say "constitutionally," I'm not referring to the political definition, I'm referring to the physical definition which is -- quote -- "in a way that relates to someone's nature or physical condition." I mean, if you're married, you already know that and if you're not yet married, when you do get married, you'll learn that really quickly. God gave us gifts differing according to the gender that he has assigned us. But according to the world, that is a terrible, backward, bigoted and even hateful thing to believe today. But we believe it because Jesus not only stated in it Genesis, he also demonstrated in the choices he made to lead his church.

You see, today gender is thought of as a fluid construct, it's something that's not part of God's order of creation but rather something that we get to invent as we shape and mold ourselves outside of that order. In fact, we demand freedom from that order, a freedom so extreme, we demand the right to change our sex. We also demand the right to re-invent Jesus as simply a slave to a patriarchal system that he was brought up in. We think, too bad Jesus was locked into a male-dominated culture. I mean, too bad Jesus was unable to see how sexist he really was. Too bad he was blinded by his DNA to see that there was virtually no difference between men and women. Too bad he didn't have the wisdom of Paul, who said in *Galatians 3:28*: *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* Wait a minute. Jesus Christ is the source of all wisdom, including the wisdom that informed Paul when he wrote that. And nobody understood better than Jesus that qualitatively there is absolutely no difference whatsoever between male and female. But Jesus would be the very first one to demonstrate a constitutional difference by selecting as his disciples men only. Men who oftentimes didn't measure up to the loyalty, courage and dedication of the women who were also his followers. Think about it. If this was a meritocracy, if we were judging the church on merit alone, well then, hands down, the church should have been led by Mary and Salome and Joanna and Mary

Magdalene, I mean, they were the ones who were there when it really counted. They were the ones who risked everything to follow Jesus and they did so because he had given them personhood, dignity and value.

As the elders distribute the cup, I want us to consider what it is that Jesus has offered us because it was far more than what he was offering those women. He was offering eternal life. And though they came close, the women of Jesus, like the men as well, they just didn't get Jesus as Lord and Savior. *John 20* says this: *Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."*

You know, Mary is staring straight at two specific miracles and she doesn't even realize it. The first miracle is an easy miracle, it was the stone. Typically the stone in front of the grave was a huge round stone that was hewn into a groove and it could only be moved through tremendous effort. In this case the Scripture says the stone wasn't just rolled away, it said it was lifted and removed -- quote -- *"The stone had been taken away from the tomb."*

That was just a minor miracle. The greater miracle was that the tomb was empty. And Mary looks in the tomb, she sees the linen cloths lying there and what does she conclude? She concludes that they've stolen Jesus's body. Quote -- *"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him."* I want to tell you, I have immense sympathy for Mary, but you have to understand what she's saying here is a statement, it's an expression of unbelief. I mean, Jesus had stated over and over again exactly what would take place. He told them that after three days he would rise. Mary simply refused to believe that. So she returns from the tombs thinking that Jesus's body has been stolen and in her unbelief she earns two separate and but loving rebukes, not from people but from angels. *John 20:13: They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"* She should have been doing cartwheels! *She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."* Luke's gospel points out another question slash rebuke that was asked of her by the angel. *Says: And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"* See, Mary's faith was still lacking. She was looking at the best news you could ever imagine, Jesus had risen from the dead but she sees nothing but bad news. She had set her mind on finding a corpse. Someone has said she was preoccupied looking for a thing, looking for a body instead of a person. How many times do

we find ourselves doing the exact same thing, not looking for Jesus, the person, but for Jesus, the thing. The thing that will heal me, the thing that will give me success, the thing that will give me what I need when what we need is Jesus. I mean what Mary was looking for would have actually satisfied her temporarily, understand what might have even given her a sense of joy was finding a corpse. I can't tell you how many times in my 40 years as a Christian that I've desperately sought things that wound up being nothing more than a corpse. Some thing, some idea, some desire that was destined to decay and crumble. And I confess, sometimes I was bitterly disappointed that Jesus didn't give me that corpse, but he didn't because he had something far better. He had his living presence to give me and what he asks of me, he asks of you, and what he's asking is that we would trust him. Not only that we trust that he knows what he's doing, but we trust him with our lives.

I've known quite a few believers who are, getting older and older and older, I'm getting older and older, and I've talked to many believers who have been believers for many, many years, some shortly before they went on to heaven, and I never, ever met a believer who has said about God, man, I just trusted him too much. He was unfaithful, he was untrustworthy, he was unloving. That never happens. They all reflect back on their lives and they all

remarkably similarly think of how trustworthy and loving and kind God was. But understand, for many of them it took a lifetime to realize that. I mean it took a lifetime to realize how trustworthy he was. And what you have to understand is this thing that we go through called life contains opportunities in situations in which we can actually demonstrate faith in God. And the real deep, genuine times that that is are times when we're saying, God, you are not trustworthy, you are not loving, you are not kind, and what you're doing to me isn't fair. Oftentimes when people feel like that, I say you have something right now that's precious in your life. You have the opportunity to say in spite of the fact that I feel that way, I'm going to trust you. And like I say, every single oldster that I've ever met has said in the end, you'll find out that he was trustworthy, that he was loving, that he was kind.

And so as we are about to partake of the cup, I just want to ask you if you feel that, if you feel like you just can't get there, if you feel like God is acting in a way that is unloving, unkind, untrustworthy, give that to him. Say this is my gift to you, God, I can't give you anything that's of value other than the fact that I trust you when life and circumstances are suggesting or shouting that I shouldn't. You have no idea how precious that is to God. So just think about that for a moment before we take the cup.

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 heads, hearts and feet. It's where we talk about having some kind of practical application, what does it really mean to remember Christ in a practical sense. One of the things we were talking about is how Jesus's pierced body gushed blood and water, it represented this living water that is represented by the Holy Spirit inside of you, and God promised that the Holy Spirit would entered into every single one of us and would come out as living water as we share the gospel. And one of the questions I want to ask us this morning is to ask yourself, have I shared -- when was the last time you shared the gospel with anybody? Do you share this good news that we have the privilege of knowing? And I wonder -- I remember 15, 20, 30 years ago, it was everybody that I met, that's what you did, you shared the gospel. We used to go door to door. It was a major undertaking. This was what we're here for, to share this good news, and I just wonder how many people do that today? I don't think a lot. And I think one of the primary reasons is fear. I mean this culture is far more hostile to the gospel than it was 20 years ago. And I was thinking how in the world do you get over that? And I was -- a couple of

weeks ago we had a staff meeting and one of the things that we showed at the staff meeting was a video. I'm going to show it. It's about five minutes. It's from Rosaria Butterfield. You got to understand, Rosaria Butterfield was a leading feminist lesbian who is now a committed Christian, married, three kids and her whole journey was -- was started and brought about by what I think is a starting place for people who are frightened. The starting place is hospitality. What this started with is somebody inviting somebody to dinner. And hospitality is not, oh, she puts on really great parties. Hospitality is opening your house to strangers, people you don't know, like your neighbor or like somebody you just run into a couple of times, say, hey, would you like to come over to eat? So I'd like you to just take five minutes to just look at this. This is Rosaria Butterfield and she's speaking about the importance of hospitality.

(video playing)

She says, one line in that I love, she says "show up in the lives of unbelievers, we must." That's a command that we are all under, every single one of us, go out into all the world. And I just think so many of us are just, we're scared, we're scared people are going to ask us really hard questions, going to ask us stuff about gay marriage and all of these other things and we just don't know what to do next. Well, here's the first step. Just invite

somebody into your home. There's no strings attached whatsoever with this invitation that this pastor and his wife gave and they simply extended hospitality. They didn't talk about making them into Christians, inviting them to church, they just extended the warmth of hospitality to them. So my suggestion to all of us is that we can start with just looking around in our neighborhood and saying who is a stranger here that I can invite to dinner? Who is somebody that I can just start to share the good news of Christ just by extending hospitality? And then give God the opportunity to present what he's going to present and just have you walk in that. Are you willing to do that? Let's ask ourselves that as we pray.

Father, I just again thank you for the privilege that every single one of us has, those of us that know Jesus as Lord and Savior, also though that we have been given this privilege in order to bless, you have been blessed to bless. And Lord, sometimes it just seems like we have clammed up, we have shut up, we have ceased sharing the good news because it's too scary, it's too icky, it's too fraught with danger. And so, Lord, I pray today that you would plant in the hearts of your people the idea that simple hospitality, simply inviting a stranger, not people that you know, but people that you need to get to know into your home can be the start of a very vital exchange, such as it was for Rosaria

Butterfield which brought her all the way from radical feminism into the gospel. And I pray this for each and every one, I pray this blessing for each an every one and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.