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

**March 29, 2015**

**Loving What Jesus Loves**

**Selected Scriptures**

**Prayer:** *Father, we just want to again thank you for who you are, thank you for your grace, thank you for your gifts, thank you for your goodness. And Lord, we just thank you for the cross. Father, this morning, again, we just want to think about that whole process which began with your triumphal entry into Jerusalem that we have seen with the palms that we have right here in front of us. I pray, Lord, as we open up your book, as we look into what took place there, that you would give us again the grace and the power of your Holy Spirit to make these things a permanent part of our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, one of the things that we've been taken with lately in studying the life of Jesus and one of the things that we've been talking about a lot is how often and how many times he confounded those folks that were around him. He confounded his contemporaries, he confounded his disciples, and this triumphant march that he had into Jerusalem was no exception. Actually this is the second time that we get to look at the triumphal entry of

Jesus into Jerusalem. We've been doing the life of Christ if you remember in the communion service, and it just so happened we started off this month at the very beginning of the chapter that discusses that in John 12, and that opens with a large crowd that had gathered outside a party that was being thrown by Simon who had been healed by Jesus. And now the guest of honor was obviously Jesus, but the celebration centered around Lazarus, the person that he had raised from the dead. And this is what it says in *John 12:9*, it says: *When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus. The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.*

Jesus once again confounds the crowd and his disciples by carefully

choosing to ride not on a stallion or even a mule but on this lowly service animal, a donkey. And it wasn't even a donkey, it was the foal of a donkey; that's a baby donkey one year old or less. And this crowd that has gathered is intent on seeing Jesus as this military/Messiah figure, and Jesus is determined to disabuse them of that image. So there's a good reason why Jesus would choose this lowly service animal to ride into Jerusalem on. But there's also a subtext as to why Jesus was so confounding on so many levels to so many people. The first and the most obvious reason was that Jesus was unlike any other human who had ever been born, except maybe Adam. In fact, Jesus is known as the second Adam because only Adam and Jesus came into this world perfectly. Adam gave up his perfection. You know, in spite of being placed in a literal Garden of Eden, Adam chose to side with the serpent and seek out the one thing that God had told him was forbidden. And Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit and they permanently gave up their perfection not only for themselves but for every subsequent son or daughter of Adam, and that of course includes you and me. Jesus is known as the second Adam because he, too, entered this world perfectly. Only Jesus maintained his perfection. In fact, only Jesus was able to live his entire life spotlessly and without sin. Only Jesus was able to challenge his contemporaries by saying in *John 8:46*: "*Which one of you convicts me of sin?*" You know, think about what that statement says. I mean, this may well be the most

audacious statement ever made by a human being. But it wasn't really audacious, it was absolutely true. Jesus dared his contemporaries to find one single sin in his life, because both he and his contemporaries knew that there was none. His contemporaries fired back with a statement that proved they had no answer other than an ad hominem attack. This is what they said in *John 8:48*, they said: "*Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?*"

Jesus was confounding because there was no one like him in all of creation. He was also confounding to the crowd because he knew every single thing there was to know about the people and the places and the events that were unfolding as they led up to his crucifixion. See, he was the author, he was the prime mover behind every single event that took place including seeing the donkey that he rode on. In fact, nothing about what took place from his entry into Jerusalem until his very last gasp on the cross was by accident. I mean, if you read only John's account, it makes it seem like Jesus just kind of was walking down and he happened on a donkey and he decided to ride on it, but to read the other accounts fills in all the details. And there we learn that Jesus had directed two of his disciples to a specific time and a specific place to secure that donkey and that the details even included what to say to the people they were borrowing the donkey from. The

details are in Mark's gospel. In Mark 11, Jesus says this, he says: *"Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat."* And again we think well, how in the world did Jesus know that? He was God. He knew all things. He says: *"Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" So you see, nothing, nothing in this entire process was left to chance. And Jesus wanted to be seen riding on a donkey and he wanted to be seen that way for two different reasons. First, he wanted to quash any idea that this was a military takeover; and secondly and even more importantly, it was to fulfill the prophesy of Zechariah 9:9 which says this: *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."**

So picture Jesus, if you will, just kind of in your mind's eye, get a sense of Jesus and he's moving on this donkey through a crowd that has started out at the house of Simon, it's now, it's making its way toward Jerusalem, and this crowd is abuzz with anticipation. This Jesus riding on a donkey looks nothing like a triumphant leader entering into a city as its new ruler. The crowd is looking for a stallion; instead they get a donkey. And the

sight of the donkey itself is confounding but the crowd is willing to overlook that because there in that very same crowd is Lazarus, the very one who Jesus raised from the dead. So the crowd is thinking perhaps this Jesus is just profoundly different from all the other Messiahs that have come and gone. And we know that much is true. You see, what was taking place as that crowd made its way down the hill into Jerusalem was being viewed by far more than just the locals who were caught up in it. In fact, the entire universe was bent over to see its king and creator humble, mounted on a donkey, entering into what he knew was his own certain death. Now, the earthly crowd was ecstatic because they felt that at long last they had their Messiah who was going to at long last throw off the shackles of Roman rule and give these oppressed people their freedom. Luke's gospel describes the scene this way in Luke 19, it says this. It says: *And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. As he was drawing near -- already on the way down the Mount of Olives -- the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."*

You see, the greatest secret the world has ever known was a secret only to those on planet earth who really had no desire to know it in the first place. But Jesus is saying all of creation already knew, I mean the heavens knew, the spirit world knew, even the inanimate objects knew, and Jesus acknowledged that if those few who had acknowledged, even if unwittingly, the enormity of what was taking place, he said if they had not given expression to the fact that the King of the universe was now entering into the battle of the ages, if they didn't acknowledge, then even the rocks would begin to shout. But then Jesus, who was no stranger to confounding actions, once again did something that astounded both his enemies and his disciples. Verse 41 says: *And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it.*

So once again, I need you to put yourself in the crowd. I need you to see exactly what's going on. They've already been confounded by this donkey, but in spite of that, the enthusiasm of the crowd continues to grow and it starts to reach a fever pitch, and they're putting down palms and they're putting down cloaks and they're shouting and they're praising so much so that the Pharisees are consumed with outrage. This is the greatest outpouring of earthly glory that Jesus will ever see in his public ministry, and his response is to burst into tears. I mean, the word used to describe Jesus's weeping is not this comfortable word that we use to

describe a discreet tear shed here or there. What it describes is a vocal wailing that cannot be contained or constrained by manners or by discretion. I mean, it's a sorrow that bursts any borders of social restraints, and it is that sorrow that is more confounding than anything, because scripture goes on to describe just what that sorrow was based on. It says in verse 41: *And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."* See, Jesus was wailing over the fate that awaited Jerusalem, because not only did Jesus know exactly what the present contained, he also knew every aspect of the near and the distant future. And we know that 37 years after Jesus spoke these words, Rome surrounded Jerusalem on all sides and slaughtered them exactly as Jesus said they would. Jesus knew the future 37 years out. But he also knew the future three days out. And he knew without a doubt that this very same crowd which was caught up in glorifying what they thought was this earthly Messiah would be the very same crowd caught up in punishing him for refusing to be the god they wanted to create. I mean, Jesus knew that soon the cries



that praised him would be replaced with the cries of "Crucify him!" Soon he'd hear the sound of soldiers who had come to arrest him. He would hear the false testimony and the feigned outrage leading up to the one crucial question that he had come to earth to answer. It's in *Mark 14:61*. It says: *Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the son of the blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."* And Jesus would answer that question with three different assertions of his deity. First he says, "I am;" a statement of the eternal God. Secondly, he prophesies his coming as the Son of Man, the exalted title given him in *Daniel 7* to the Kings of kings; and thirdly, he describes himself as seated at the right hand of power; that's the position of high honor given only to the son of God. Jesus when he said that, knew he also done something else, he had also given the equivalent of a death sentence to himself. See, his claim to be God himself, his claim to be the Messiah would be all they needed to start the process of his crucifixion.

Verse 63 says: *And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him*

with blows. And we all know what took place afterward. You know, the spitting led to the slapping, the slapping led to the punching, eventually he'd be turned over to the Roman soldiers to be made sport of. That led to a crown, a crown made out of thorns mocking his claim to be king. And repeatedly over the course of the next few hours, he would be beaten and mocked as a pseudo king. You know, the only true king the universe had ever known would be crowned with a crown of thorns and then slapped, spit on, and mocked. *Luke 22 says: They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.* Now, the crown led to a scourging, and the scourging would have left a broken, bloodied, staggering display of unfettered brutality had he been guilty of the worst of crimes. The fact is, he was innocent of everything. Now, the only spotless human who had ever lived would then be paraded in front of the crowd by Pilate in hopes that somehow someone so profoundly brutalized would stimulate some sympathy from the crowd. Well, it turns out that Pilate was terribly mistaken. The sight of Jesus only intensified the desire to further brutalize, torment, and then finally execute him, all for a crime that no one could identify. So Pilate brings him before the crowds in *Matthew 27*, it says this: *Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!" And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they*

*shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.*

You see, Jesus saw every last detail of what was going to unfold as he came down from the heights of Bethany entering into the city of Jerusalem, but that's not at all why he was weeping, and that's why this Jesus is so confounding, because what he was weeping for was the very people who were going to slaughter him. He was weeping because he saw God's justice explode on Jerusalem some 37 years later when the cup of God's wrath was finally full. And as he's entering Jerusalem, he has this vision of seeing that cup finally begin to overflow, and Jesus isn't just weeping, he is wailing and he's weeping not for himself, he's weeping for them. And please don't make the mistake of thinking of them as just conquered Israel, of thinking of them as just some isolated group historically and culturally separated from who we are. Believe me, "them" is us. *And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"* We are those children. I'm reminded of that every time I hear that song, that song that we just sang before I

came up here, "How Deep the Father's Love For Us." It says:

Behold the man upon a cross

My sin upon His shoulders

Ashamed I hear my mocking voice

Call out among the scoffers

It was my sin that held Him there

Until it was accomplished

His dying breath has brought me life

I know that it is finished

See, Jesus wept for the mockers, the scoffers, the brutalizers who stripped him, beat him, and executed him, and that includes us.

And so, yeah, you talk about confounding.

I said Jesus was altogether unlike us in so many ways, and one of the ways that we seldom consider about why he was so confounding is this: Jesus loved many of the things that we hate, and he hated many of the things that we love. Let me explain. Jesus actually stated this, he was once engaged in a conversation with the Pharisees and this is what he said in *Luke 16*. Jesus was saying: "*No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*" *The Pharisees, who*

were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God." This is why Jesus was so confounding. You see, the crowd loved adulation, the crowd loved power. Jesus loved servanthood. You know, the religious leaders, they loved to exalt themselves. Jesus loved humility. And the people that Jesus ministered to loved only what they could see and taste and touch. Jesus loved faithfulness based on not what you could see, taste, and touch. And what Jesus demonstrated in the tears that he shed was that while the people he served loved idolatry and brutality and wickedness, he loved forgiveness. That's altogether confounding.

Jesus hated much of what we love. And every single thing that he hated was unfolding in front of him. I mean, some of it came from the crowd but some of it also came from his own disciples. *Proverbs 6:16* says this, it says: *These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.* Well, it was all right in front of him. As he's coming into Jerusalem, what is in front of Jesus's vision? There's the proud look of the

religious leaders, there's a lying tongue in Peter's denial, there are hands that shed innocent blood in the Roman soldiers, there's a heart that devises wicked plans in Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, there are feet that are swift in running to evil in the crowds, there's a false witness who speaks lies because we had false witnesses who spoke lies, and there's one who sows discord among the brethren, and it's his own disciples, and James and John sadly fit that bill. I mean, this is right -- what happened right at this time was they tried to go behind the other disciples' back and claim the positions of power when they thought Jesus was going to come into his power. In *Mark 10:41* it says: *And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.* They sowed discord among their own brethren. So everything that Jesus hated with every single fiber of his being is about to take place right before him. And so in spite of all the adulation and the shouts of the crowd, he bursts out in tears not only because he hated what we love but because he also loved what we hated. Jesus loved mercy. And in spite of the things that he hated, in spite of the things that were going to be done to him, he wept, he wailed, and he sought forgiveness even for those who were hammering the nails. *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* Jesus was utterly confounding because he loved what we hate, and he hated what we loved.

You know, we've been studying the life of Elijah these last 15 weeks and the study came to its culmination in this confrontation that God has with Elijah in the wilderness. And God presents Elijah with three spectacular miracles: One of them is an earthquake, one of them is this great wind, and the other is this fire, and yet God was in none of those miracles. Well, God was introducing Elijah to a far more powerful miracle than earth, wind, or fire; it was the miracle of his presence. It was the miracle that the prophet Ezekiel explained by saying in *Ezekiel 36*, he said this: *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.* See, it's the kind of miracle that God through Christ offered to a world that was confounded by that very offer. You see, Jesus was offering a brand new way of living that would change the very way and the very things that we love and the things that we hate. It was a way that could break the fetters that bound his hearers up until the very day that he arrived. Jesus saw his ministry as one that involved liberating folks who were literally held captive. This is what he said in his first public statement in *Luke 4*. He said this: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of*

*sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed."*

That's good news. But it was good news, the good news that Jesus came to bring was good news only to those who heard it as good news. Those were folks who knew that they were poor and that they were blind and that they were captured by their oppressors, but those hearers were this tiny little minority. The vast majority of Jesus's hearers had grown to see themselves as able to hear, as spiritually rich, as free and able to see and they were absolutely in no mood to see Jesus as anything other than a threat. Jesus offered to free them from their captivity to a twisted way of loving and hating and they ended up trying to throw him off a cliff. I mean, he offered them the miracle of a transformed heart and they responded by trying to kill him. This is not the miracle we're interested in. God himself would take up residence inside us; that was the miracle. *1 Corinthians 6:19* says: *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.* God is saying his spirit would make us this brand new temple where he lived. And when he came into that temple, he would from that very moment begin changing our very thoughts and desires. We'd begin to love what he loves and hate what he hates.



You know, there's two types of miracles that we see in scripture and two types of people who receive them. There are miracles that shout, there are miracles of earth, wind, and fire that demonstrate the extraordinary power of those who are delivering the miracles. And Elijah knew that power, I mean, he saw God demonstrate though how empty it was. And when the spectacular miracle that he performed on Mount Carmel didn't usher in this new age of belief, Elijah was crushed to the point of wanting to die. So God had to show Elijah that there's a much deeper, much more powerful miracle that didn't shout. In fact, it whispered. Jesus demonstrated the exact same thing over and over and over again, because Jesus did lots of miracles that shouted. I mean, he healed the sick. But what happened, by and large, it just produced greater and greater crowds of sick people who were seeking what, to be healed.

In the first chapter of the gospel of Mark we see Jesus doing something that illustrates the importance of miracles that whisper instead of shout. Jesus had been healing the sick and what do you know, the crowds began to grow and grow and they got larger and larger as more and more desperate people lined up to get healed. The story's in *Mark 1:33*, it says this, it says: *And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. And*

*rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."*

I want you to think about that for a second. Did you get what Jesus just said? Do you get how confounding he was? See, this doesn't fit at all in with the narrative that we have of Jesus as the great healer, and we know he was the great healer. But here Mark's gospel is telling us as the crowds are growing greater and greater, no doubt filled up with many who are sick just seeking to be healed, Jesus confounds his disciples by saying let's get out of here. I mean, in essence that's what he said. Verse 38: *And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."* Now we ask, was Jesus just being heartless? Did he not realize that he was leaving many, many sick people still in their sickness? Or was it because Jesus understood that it's extraordinarily easy to miss the main miracle that whispers for the lesser miracle that shouts. You see, in fact, every single one of Jesus's hearers was broken in a way that had eternal consequences, and you know why? Because they loved what he hated, and they hated what he loved, and only the whispered

miracle could heal them. And it's the same for you and me. Every single one of us is on our way to a Godless eternity outside the presence of God because every one of us is born broken, fallen, and sinful. And Jesus alone was able to take on the penalty of your sin and my sin by laying down his perfect life as a substitution for my life of sin. And so the miracle that Jesus is offering to virtually everyone who heard him was a soul set free from death by the payment that Jesus would make for them on the cross. And Jesus knew exactly why he was here. He understood that it was to glorify his Father by rescuing hopelessly lost sinners, that he was here to transform hearts and to shape and mold us into his image for the glory of his Father, and that nothing was more important than that, not even physical sickness.

Jesus also fed the hungry. That's another miracle that shouts. And it led to great crowds who followed him, but they were seeking a magic show and they were seeking a free meal. In *John 6:24* it says: *So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that*

*endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." So Jesus says work for the food that never perishes. He says there's two different kinds of food. There's food which perishes; that's the food that shouts. And then there's food that never perishes, it's food that endures; it's the food that whispers. And the only food that really matters is the food that endures. And it's the food that Christ says that he alone can give. It's the transformative grace of God's Holy Spirit living within you and it's far more important than any food you will ever eat. And so Jesus says work for that food. And the people said, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" And Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."*

So what Jesus is saying, he's making it very clear, the only work that really matters is the work of faith. What is that? Well, it's trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who will pay your ransom, redeem your life, become your Lord, and transform what you love and hate into what he loves and what he hates. What Jesus is offering is himself. That's the miracle that whispered. But you know, it's an offer that most people refused because they preferred

instead the miracles that shouted.

There was an even more spectacular shouting miracle, Jesus raised the dead, perhaps the most spectacular of the earth, wind, and fire miracles. But you know, it had the effect that all these spectacular miracles had. Those whom God had chosen were drawn, they were softened and finally melted by the warmth and grace of his power. But those whom God had not chosen, what about them? Well, they were threatened, they were embittered, they were repulsed by the very same miracle. I mean, their hardened hearts, instead of melting, turned into stone. The very sight of this rotting corpse raised from the dead was not enough of a miracle to change a hardened heart. So Lazarus raises up from the dead and some see the risen Lazarus and they say of Christ, he is truly God. Some look at the same risen corpse and they say this Jesus has got to die. *John 11* says this: *Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better*

for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they made plans to put him to death. You see, they hated the one true God. They loved their own power. Now if you ever need proof that miracles alone will never save anybody, this is it. And what this miracle did was it led to these great crowds pushing Jesus into Jerusalem to be the new Messiah and Jesus once again confounds the people and his own disciples, and he did it because he loved the things that people hated, and he hated the things that the people loved. They loved a stallion and a triumphant Messiah. He loved a donkey and a suffering servant.

Now, God has done many, many spectacular miracles through Jesus, and they had their place. But understand, they were not the main miracle that Jesus was seeking to impart. Jesus was quite capable of miracles that shouted, but he was far more interested in the miracles that whispered, miracles that would change what and how we love and hate, and it is those miracles that he offered to virtually everyone. And you know, if you are a child of God, then you are sitting right now in the middle of that same miracle. It's the same miracle that Ezekiel described. You see, the moment you

became a child of God, God did a heart transplant on you. And the heart of stone that you once had has been removed and it's been replaced with a heart of flesh, and here's the crucial part: along with that new heart comes the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Verse 27: *And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.* This is the miracle that Christ is offering everyone. It's not an earthquake, it's not a wind storm, it's not a fire. In the terms of those types of miracles, it appears to be nothing at all. In fact it's the greatest of all miracles. It's the ability to have my own heart transformed, to have my own desires re-shaped and reformed by God himself, to have God's Holy Spirit now living inside me, transforming me into a unique image of God's own son. You know, that's not some theory, that's not some nice theological thought. It's a miracle. And I know that it's a miracle because I'm a recipient of that very miracle. And if you love Jesus, so are you.

You know, it's been over 40 years but I still have enough of a memory to remember my own personal captivity. What it was like wanting to get high every single day, nurturing grudges, delighting in getting even, being a slave to a whole host of passions that drove me and rode me just like that donkey that Jesus rode on. I'm far from perfect, but I know for a fact that those things that controlled me back then have no power over me now. I mean, things

that I loved back then I truly hate now, today. That miracle may have taken 40 years to accomplish in my life but that's less than a nanosecond in God's timetable. And it's a miracle that God promises to every single one of his children. Listen to what God says in 2 Corinthians 3:17. He says: *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* That's the miracle. But there's a reason why such a miracle is a hard sell today. You see, it's a miracle of freedom available only to those who recognize that they're not free. And you know, even the offer of that miracle people resent. In *John 8:31*, it says this: *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say you will become free?" They resented the offer. And Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* Could you imagine, could you imagine being finally freed from anger, freed from bitterness, freed from lust, freed from jealousy or from any of the host of



sins that rob us of our freedom? *"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."*

See, Jesus had the capacity to heal and the ability to forgive to such an extent that he wailed in sorrow for the very people who were going to slaughter him. I mean, do you understand the power that Jesus had? I mean, Jesus is here to give it to whoever wants it. But the question is do you want it? I mean, would you like to have the power to forgive like Jesus forgave? Would you like to have the power to hate what Jesus hated and to love what he loved? Well, if you're still held captive, if you are still enslaved and you don't even realize it yet, then nothing could be more threatening than that offer. See, the power of bitterness or lust or envy or revenge cannot only enslave you, it can blind you as well. Let's say somebody hurt you and they hurt you deeply. Maybe it was yesterday, maybe it was last week, maybe it was fifty years ago. The world loves the power to be able to strike back, to be able to get even, to be able to hurt somebody back. That's how we hate. Maybe somebody insulted you, maybe somebody belittled you, made you feel like nothing when you were in elementary school years ago and it haunts you even today. You wouldn't be the first and you by far would not be the last to want the power to make that hurt go away. Well, Jesus alone has that power. And you and I frankly don't have the power to be able to forgive somebody who has

deeply hurt us to change what we love and what we hate, but Jesus does. So the question is, would you like to have his power to be able to forgive somebody who deeply hurt you? I mean, we see Jesus demonstrating it, we see how incredibly confounding it is, that he was even confounding to his disciples. *John 12* says: *His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.* See, they understood afterwards and they understood because God had done a miracle in their lives as well. And I'm telling you, if you are a child of God, you are right now standing in the middle of that same miracle. God has removed your heart of stone, he's replaced it with a heart of flesh, and even now God's Holy Spirit is within you, changing what you love, changing what you hate into the same loves and same hates Jesus had. I mean, you may not burst into tears over the fate of your enemies like Jesus did, but you will be forever changed and forever changing into the very image of the very same Jesus. You may also notice that practicing these new loves and these new hates makes you confounding to those around you, to your non believing friends, and it goes with the territory.

Now, if you've not yet received the miracle that Christ is offering, you, too, can have the power to rearrange your life, your loves, and your hates, because his offer still stands. He says

this in *John 5:24*: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." So if you'd like to receive the miracle that whispers, the miracle that will give you the power to change what you love and what you hate into the very same loves and hates that Jesus had, the miracle of a heart transplant, understand Jesus is waiting right here and right now. Speak to me, speak to any one of the deacons, any one of the elders. Let's get it done today. Love what he loved; hate what he hated. Let's pray.

*Father, I thank you for the confounding vision we have of Palm Sunday, of Jesus, the source of all of this adulation, bursting into tears, and I just think of the incredible power that is behind the ability to forgive even those who would slaughter you. Father, I pray that you would give us the grace, the strength, the peace, the power, and the wisdom of that miracle and the understanding that it is happening even as we speak. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*