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Now is the Time for the Judgment of This World

John 12:31

Prayer: *Father, we do again thank you for the fact that you are the precious -- or you've sent the precious Lamb of God to us, and we thank you, Lord, that you were willing to do that, that you were willing to make that incredibly painful sacrifice to see your son offered up as the sacrifice for our sin. Father, today we want to remember exactly what it is you've done; and Lord, we need your Holy Spirit's power and presence to be able to do that, and so we pray your Spirit would accompany us, that you would guide us, walk with us as we enter into what it is your son did for us on the cross. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and there for the last time he celebrated the Passover supper. Matthew 26 describes it. It says this: *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." Jesus took the bread and he took the wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and blood and then he invited the disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to repeat the remembrance of this offering on a regular basis, and we call this "the Lord's table," and we celebrate it by meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, by examining ourselves, by asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, by confessing our 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."*

Now we've been following the life of Jesus and we've worked our way up to the 12th chapter of the gospel of John, and we've been looking at a series of confounding statements that Jesus has been making, and by now his disciples are used to hearing him say things that they don't quite understand. It says in *John 12:16*: *His disciples did not understand these things at first.* And where we are right now, Jesus has triumphantly entered into Jerusalem, he's been approached by Philip, and Philip said there's a group of Greeks who wish to speak with you, and apparently that's the sign

to Jesus that his passion is about to begin in earnest. And so Jesus responds to Philip's request, but he responds with another series of confounding statements, much of which we've been looking at in the last few months. The statements, they're confounding because the disciples understand only the tiniest fraction of what it is that Jesus is about to do. In fact, none of them including the disciples would fully grasp what was about to take place until well after Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven and sent his Holy Spirit to help them make sense of what was taking place.

So Jesus makes this statement to the crowd in *John 12:31*, he says this: "*Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*" You see, Jesus was the only one who knew precisely what was taking place and only Jesus knew that very soon this triumphant crowd was going to turn on him and become the very ones who would howl for his crucifixion. Only Jesus knew exactly where this procession that he was part of was going. And so in the midst of what seems to be a triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Jesus declares that the whole world is about to be judged. He says, "*Now is the judgment of this world.*" Well, he couldn't have been more accurate. You see, God was about to put on display his hatred of sin. He was about to demonstrate to the world, the entire world, that he was a holy God with a holy revulsion of anything that came

short of his glory. He was going to publicly judge the world for the sins committed by his sheep going all the way back to Adam and all the way forward to the spring of 2015 right here and forward into the future we know not how far. The entire universe was going to witness the fact that a holy God, a God whose very nature was perfection itself was also a God who was going to judge and to punish the imperfections of sin. Some folks think this is ridiculous. They say, "If your God is all powerful, then he can do whatever he wants including forgiving me of the very sin of not believing in him." But just because God is all powerful doesn't mean that he can choose to violate his own character, because there are some things that God simply cannot do. *Hebrews 6:18* says: *It is impossible for God to lie.* And to pretend that God can just look the other way and ignore sin is to state outright that God is willing to lie about sin's consequences. And when you consider the fact that God the Father had to endure seeing his only begotten Son crucified in order to pay the price of our sin, well then you begin to realize just how seriously God had to take the consequences of sin. And so the cross is God's statement to the universe that all of us, past, present, and future, all of us understand that the wages of sin is death and that God was willing to embrace that death for us.

So Jesus was 100 percent correct in saying that the judgment of

this world was about to commence, but the only thing that he didn't mention in that statement was that all of that holy, righteous wrath that God was going to display against the fallen, sinful rebellion of earth itself was going to be poured out not on the earth, not on its creatures, but on the very Christ who was declaring the judgment. You see, only Jesus fully understood in the midst of this adoring crowd that soon all of God's righteous fury, past, present, and future, would be poured out directly on his head. To the Jewish leaders and to Rome itself, this was a fitting end to this up uppity carpenter's son, an obscure nobody from a backwater town with the gall to claim that not only was he sinless but he was also the son of God. Well, in fact, the judgment of the world for its sins would include the greatest of all sins. The world itself was going to sit in judgment for killing God himself. I mean, no wonder Jesus's words were confounding. What he was describing is unfathomable. I mean, human beings made in the very image of God were going to literally spit in God's face. They were going to mock him and strip him and scourge him and then nail God to a cross. They thought they were killing a carpenter's son. They were slaughtering God himself. And "they" includes us. You and I were in that very crowd when Christ was brought forth as an object of abject horror, having been sliced to pieces by Roman scourging and then presented as an object of pity by Pilate who was seeking to get out of executing him. And

when the crowd shouted out to "crucify him," and Pilate insisted that he was innocent of this man's blood, the crowd shouted all the more, "May his blood be on us and on our children." I've said it many, many times, we are those children. The Jewish and the Roman rulers may have conspired to execute this uppity carpenter's son, but they were only players in a drama that God had planned before time itself had even begun. They had no idea that since the dawn of time, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit had planned for this very day and the events that would soon be unfolding. God, the Father and God, the Son together would demonstrate the vastness of God's holy righteous wrath against sin while simultaneously demonstrating the depths of God's mercy by having God himself on the cross absorb the wrath unto himself. It's no wonder that the disciples were confounded. I mean, they still had hopes that Jesus' intention was to take Jerusalem and become a worldly leader. And Jesus' intentions were so much bigger than that that they really couldn't grasp what he meant by saying, *"Now is the judgment of this world."*

The very next statement that Jesus made was as equally as confounding. He said this: *"Now the ruler of this world will be cast out."* Well, the ruler of this world is Satan. And we know that he's the ruler of this world because Revelation tells us that eons ago there was a war that took place in heaven and that Satan was soundly defeated, and that because of that defeat, he was cast

out literally from heaven. Unfortunately scripture is very clear about where he landed. It says this in Revelation 12:7, it says: *Then war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels also fought, but he could not prevail, and there was no place for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was thrown out -- the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world. He was thrown to earth, and his angels with him.*

One of the worst things I could ever think about, I could ever imagine, you see this, you hear about it happening all the time, is this thing called a home invasion. And a home invasion is when a group of thugs takes over a house and they kidnap essentially the occupants and they hold them hostage until a greater power comes along to rescue them. Well, literally Satan and his thugs, a/k/a his demons, pulled off a planetary invasion. They have temporarily seized this planet and they're holding the inhabitants captive. And when Jesus declared, *"Now the ruler of this world will be cast out,"* he was saying that he was there, right then, right there to stop it. Jesus was saying that Satan who had already been cast out of heaven was about to be cast out of what, or who, or where? Well, to answer that, we have to go back to what the world was like before Christ had even arrived. This was a place where Satan, the ruler of this world, had unlimited power and control over the

people of this world. He had enslaved the world with the most efficient kind of slavery there ever was from the standpoint of the slave owner, and he had captured the world all the way back in the Garden of Eden without even firing a shot. You know, the serpent told Adam that if he would only be willing to eat this forbidden fruit, what? He would be like God. Ligon Duncan pointed out an incredible irony in that offer. The irony is this: Adam and Eve were already like God. They were already perfect. They were already created in God's own image. And so this serpent's offer to make them like God, it had the exact opposite effect. They went from being perfect just like God to being fallen and imperfect and no longer anything like the God who had created them. And Adam, because he was the fountainhead of all of humanity, he was the head of the entire stream of humanity, when he became polluted, he passed on that pollution downstream to every one of us. And so Adam's disobedience enslaved all of us. But it was a slavery just like the serpent's offer in the garden. It appeared to offer everything when in fact it gave nothing and it took away everything. It appeared to the world as freedom, freedom from rules, freedom from expectations, freedom from having to conform to God's idea of holiness. Little did the world know that it had traded in a very light yoke for a crippling one and that it traded in light for darkness. Jesus came to turn that world upside down. Hence when Jesus arrived in this world, God described it this way

in *Matthew 4:16*, it says: *"The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."* You see, Jesus himself represented the light shining in that darkness. But just like the insects and the creatures that live under the rocks, the world also had also grown used to and quite much in love with the darkness. Just like when you flip over a rock on a hot, sunny, bright day, the creatures of darkness flee from the pain of that light. So God says in *John 3:19*: *"And this is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil."*

So the question is: How did Jesus cast out the one who had enveloped all of this world in his darkness? I know there's more than a few people who would suggest that for all intents and purposes, it looks like Satan's planetary invasion has been successful, like he's won. My guess is if you were to ask the average person on the street who they thought was winning the battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil, the forces of light and the forces of darkness, their answer would probably be the forces of darkness. Christians all over the Middle East and Africa are being imprisoned and slaughtered. They're being driven out of their homes, they're being forced to live in refugee camps. The gospel is being slandered by increasingly

successful prosperity preachers all over America. And even the institution of marriage is crumbling under the intense pressure of a highly mobilized same sex marriage juggernaut that has successfully turned us into haters because we believe what God said when he said that marriage is between a man and a woman. And so who and how and exactly when did Jesus cast out this ruler of the world? Well, I can answer that in three words. Jesus' death on the cross. That really sums it up. And I also think that Jesus would say to us about his death on the cross and what it really meant and why it was so confounding, that appearances can be deceiving, and that he doesn't fight the way the world fights. And there's no better example of just how deceiving appearances can be than the cross itself.

Tim Keller points that out in *Walking With God Through Pain and Suffering*, one of his more recent books, listen to what he says. He says: "Imagine you've been an avid follower of Jesus. You've seen his power to heal and do miracles. You've heard the unsurpassed wisdom of his speech and the quality of his character. You are thrilled by the prospect of his leadership. More and more people are flocking to hear him. There's no one like him. You imagine that he will bring about a golden age for Israel if everyone listens to him and follows his lead. But then, there you are at the cross with the few of his disciples who have the stomach

to watch. And you hear people say, "I've had it with this God. How could he abandon the best man we have ever seen? I don't see how God could bring any good out of this." What would you say? You would likely agree. And yet you are standing there looking at the greatest, most brilliant thing God could ever do for the human race. On the cross, both justice and love are being satisfied -- evil, sin, and death are being defeated. You are looking at an absolute beauty, but because you cannot fit it into your own limited understanding, you are in danger of walking away from God." I mean, do we not all of us have a very limited understanding of just what it is Jesus did when he claimed: "*Now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*" Before the elders begin to distribute the bread, in order to prepare for this, we're going to have to some special music, if you just sit and listen for a moment.

We were the burden. He was the solution. As the elders begin distributing the bread, just consider this morning how you and I respond to these confounding statements and actions by Jesus. Just consider also the warning that God gives to each of us about communion itself. It's contained in *1 Corinthians 11*, says this: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many*

sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. Now I say this each time.

Communion is extremely serious business, and to enter into it in an unworthy manner is to literally court disaster. If you are not absolutely confident that you are a child of the King or if you first need to be reconciled with your brother or sister before you present your sacrifice at the altar, then please just pass the elements on. No one's going to make a big deal out of it at all. On the other hand, we can also make the mistake of thinking that unless we're absolutely flawless, we're not worthy to receive communion, and that, too, is a mistake. Being a child of the King doesn't mean that we don't sin and it doesn't mean that we never fail. It means that we recognize that salvation itself is a gift, and it's a gift that no one is capable of earning by being good. Dane Ortlund put it well when he says: "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." It also means that when we do fail, we know that we have sinned because we have the Spirit of God inside us, and that Spirit convicts us of sin. And so we grieve as children who have a father who understands and who longs to forgive and cleanse us. God says in *1 John 1:9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So*

being a child of the King doesn't mean that we are without sin. It means that when we sin, we understand that we have an advocate with the Father, someone who is literally speaking on our behalf.

1 John 2:1 says: My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. And so because we have Jesus's righteousness and not our own, we are free to eat at his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased for you on the cross. He lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die so that we could be made worthy of heaven. So take some time right now and again, ask yourself am I worthy by God's grace to receive communion, and the answer is by God's grace absolutely. Ask yourself also am I willing to trust in Christ even when he confounds and confuses me.

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." Take and eat.

So just how did Jesus cast out the ruler of this world? How did he accomplish that? Well, he did it by neutralizing the only real

weapon that Satan has and that's his ability to accuse us before God. You see, Satan has another name besides "the ruler of this world." He's also called "the accuser of the brethren."

Revelation 12:10 says this: *And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."* See, Satan is 24/7 our relentless accuser, and he is clever enough to use God's own justice and holiness and perfection as the means to demand that God, for his own character's sake, must punish all sin and all of us as sinners. But God doesn't answer to Satan. You see, when God says in *Romans 6:23*: *For the wages of sin is death*, he's not saying that out of any deference to any demands for justice made by our accuser Satan. He makes it out of the demands of his own character which Satan attempts to exploit. See, God is flawless, and we are not, and unless something is done to restore us to his state of perfection, then Satan actually does have a case. You know, if God were to wink his eye as so many suggests that he should, if he was to wink his eye to let us enter heaven in our fallen state, then God's perfection is no longer perfect. God's answer to Satan's attempt to accuse and demand justice for our sin is the second part of that verse which says: *But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* You see, Satan can stand before God

accusing us day and night and he'll have lots and lots of reasons to do so, because all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. However, if God's answer to Satan and everyone of his accusations is to state over and over and over again, "My Son paid for that," "My Son paid for that," "My Son paid for that," well then Satan has been bled of his power. I mean, Satan simply cannot accuse me of a crime that's already been paid for. And on the cross, Jesus Christ made that payment. He took on my condemnation. *Romans 8:3* says: *For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.* And when I by faith accept what Jesus did on the cross, I apply his perfection and his righteousness to my sin and I find to my absolute astonishment that God sees me now as sinless, not because I have no sin, but because it's all been paid for on the cross by his son. That's why Jesus could say in *John 12:31*: *"Now the judgment of this world, now will the ruler of this world be cast out."* That's why he could say that.

Jesus then goes on to describe exactly how that's going to happen. He says in the very next verse, verse 32: *"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."* Now remember, Jesus is saying this in response to Philip who's saying will you speak to the Greeks, the outsiders, the Gentiles. And what Jesus

was saying is that the cross was now going to open the door of salvation not just to the Jews but to the entire world, to all people. Scripture goes on to say in verse 33: *He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"* Talk about confounding. I mean, it's inconceivable to this crowd that being a -- being slaughtered on a cross would in any way be a solution to anything. I mean, it was the most ignominious thing that they could ever imagine, and Jesus continues to confound them. He goes on to say in verse 35: *So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going."* You've got to remember, only Jesus knew the precise timetable that was unfolding. Only Jesus knew that a little while longer was a matter of one or two more days before the light was snatched away, before the darkness would overtake them, before no one would know what they were doing. This was in fact Jesus's final public statement, and it was a plea. He said in verse 36: *"While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."* When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. Again, that was Jesus's last contact with the crowds before his passion. And once again, he's confounding. But

understand, he's only confounding to those who do not believe. And God explains why in the very next verse. This is *John 12:37*, he says: *Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them."* Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. Understand something. Those who did believe were not those who just happened to be some kind of more finely-tuned spiritual antenna than the others. The scripture's very clear about those who believed and those who did not believe; and those who believed were those to whom the arm of the Lord had been revealed. The rest had hearts that were so hardened that no miracle whatsoever would soften them.

As the elders begin to distribute the cup, consider the proof that these miracles were of no effect to those to whom the arm of the Lord had not been revealed. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, those to whom the arm of the Lord had been revealed recognized that he was God. The others recognized that he was an existential threat and that he had to die, and so they plotted from

that time forward to kill him. John's gospel goes on to say in verse 42: *Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.*

I would suggest to you that this is one of the scariest scriptures in the entire New Testament. Because what God is doing here, he's pinpointing the difference between having faith in Jesus and simply being willing to believe in him. God is talking about people like Nicodemus, somebody who came to Jesus at night for fear of his contemporaries and Joseph of Arimathea, whose fear kept him absolutely silent. But there's something different about these two men. There's something that separates them from all of the other silent ones, and that's that these two men broke out of their fear. You see, in spite of their fear, they took a risk that you and I will never, ever face. After Jesus died, they went to Pilate, and asked him for his broken body.

John 19:38 says this: After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being 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 the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the

body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. See, the scripture tells us that both of these men overcame their fears, they overcame their fears of their contemporaries and they boldly cast their lot with Jesus. Mark 15 describes Joseph of Arimathea this way, it says: Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Now there may have been others. Perhaps there may have been many others and that's something that only God and they know. But my question to us this morning is what does this scripture say to us? You see, if you have never shared the gospel with anyone, if your relationship with Christ is a tightly held secret, if even your friends and associates don't see you as somebody put on this earth first and foremost to glorify God, then maybe this scripture is speaking to you. See, God is making the case here that mere belief is never enough when it comes to faith. Simply believing in Jesus is not the same as saving faith. And Jesus acknowledged that difference all the way back in John 2:23. Listen to what he said back, way back at the beginning of his ministry. He said: Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus -- it's a very big "but" -- but Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man,

for He knew what was in man.

And so I ask that we would consider just for a moment, you and I were put on this planet not just to grow up, get a job, raise a family, work hard and retire. You and I were put on this planet to glorify God. If you've never done that your entire Christian life, then what makes you any different from those that God characterized by saying in verse 43: *For they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.* And the really frightening thing is that Jesus doesn't mince words when it comes to denying him. He said this in *Matthew 10:32*, he said:

"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."

2 Timothy says: *If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He will also deny us.* Understand, these are not my words; these are God's words. Says: *But for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.*

You know, one thing I love about the grace of God is that there is always within that grace forgiveness. And our best example is Peter. Peter was the rock, the one whom God entrusted to lead his

church, and we all know that Peter denied Christ three times publicly. And we all know the story and we all know that God graciously forgave and that Peter went on to be used powerfully to build up the church. See, you may have denied Christ countless times either vocally or like Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea, with your silence, but God is always ready to forgive, and that's part of what communion is all about. It's about recognizing our sin before God, acknowledging it as sin, asking his forgiveness, resolving to turn away from it. I'm not saying that God demands that you stop every single person on the street and shove a tract down their throat. I don't think God's asking that of anyone. I'm saying that if those that you rub elbows with don't even know that you're a Christian, then I suggest to you that there's something drastically wrong. I think each one of us knows what it is to speak or to not speak when God is telling you to speak.

So my question this morning is: Are you willing to put silence about Jesus in the same category as denying him? You know, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus both believed in Jesus, but their fear of being outed as a follower of Jesus kept them quiet. And yet by God's grace, they overcame that fear. And 2,000 years later, it's no different than for you or for me. It is God's grace that will give you the courage to conquer that fear. But we first have to confess it as sin. I can tell you, I'm in that same boat. I

remember years and years ago I had a situation where God gave me on a silver platter an opportunity to share the gospel and for some reason, fear just gripped my heart and I kept my mouth shut. And God's Holy Spirit convicted me greatly afterwards, and it was a source of incredible stress and pain until I finally realized this is sin, I can confess this as sin, and it was acknowledging that my silence was sin that gave me the peace that I needed to be able to go forward. I said, "God, I blew it. I was afraid. I didn't speak up. I sinned." I said, "Give me another chance." And he graciously did. And so I would ask us right now before we participate in the cup to ask God's Holy Spirit right now to examine your conscience and be willing to acknowledge if fear has kept you silent, that that is sin, serious sin, and resolve to fear God more than you fear man.

1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter, 25th verse 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."* Take and drink.

This is the head, the heart, and the feet part, the part where we try to attribute some practical applications of just what it means to remember Jesus Christ, and apropos of what I've been speaking about, I wanted to speak about a little bit the quote that's

attributed to Francis of Assisi that says: "Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary." It's interesting, because when you look and you start to do a little research, you find out that that never happened. Francis never said that. They can't find a trace of that statement any way, anywhere in any of his writings or any references whatsoever to him. So he didn't say that. And he wouldn't have said that. This is a bit of information about Francis that proves that he wouldn't have said that. This is from Glenn Stanton who wrote in The Gospel Coalition about Francis of Assisi. He says this: "Our man clearly spent a great deal of time using his words when he preached. Sometimes preaching up to five villages a day, often outdoors. In the country, Francis often spoke from a bale of straw or a granary doorway. In town, he would climb on a box or up steps in a public building. He preached to any who gathered to hear the strange but fiery little preacher from Assisi. He was sometimes so animated and passionate in his delivery that his feet moved as if he were dancing." That doesn't sound like somebody who says he's just going to let his actions speak for him, does it? And the fact is, to share the good news, you must use words. To simply let your light shine without anybody knowing where that light is coming from is to invite someone to suggest that you're a good Buddhist or animist or naturalist or anything else. The gospel requires words. *Romans 10:14* says: *How then will they call on Him in whom they*

have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? Does that mean that I have to become a preacher if I'm just kind of out and about in the -- in the workplace, at home amongst my friends, I become the preacher? Isn't that a preacher's job? Well, no. Every one of us is called on to proclaim the gospel. Peter says, always be prepared to give an account when called for the hope that's within you. That happens everywhere. And I understand how some could say that is a very frightening prospect, I'm no theologian, I don't know all of this deep theological stuff. What if somebody asked me a question that I don't have an answer for? You automatically have the answer, the answer is: I don't know, but I can find out. So there's no question to which you have no answers. The worst thing that can happen is you'd be made to look like a fool. It's happened to me many times, it's really -- it's good for you. It's good for your character. So there's really no down side. And I understand that it can be very frightening, saying what happens, when do I speak, how do I know when I'm supposed to do this? For me, this is the way I go about it. I don't think it's a matter of trying to shoehorn the gospel into somebody's life. I think it's a much more a matter of seeing every single person that comes into your life as somebody potentially sent by God to hear that gospel. As somebody who does not, if you don't know, does not have the gospel is somebody who's on his way to hell. You need to have that

fear inside you for that person and you need to be praying, God, give me the opportunity. And then I, you know, before I became a pastor, I used to use the phrase all the time, I used to drop crumbs and see if somebody would pick 'em up, and the crumbs that I would drop, very frequently is, oh, I'd speak about my church this or my church that. And if somebody picked up, say, oh, you go to church? Yeah. What church? Then you've got an opening that you can start to maneuver in. And if they don't say anything, you just continue to pray and you move on.

You know, I've often spoken about C.J. Mahaney saying that when he goes to a coffee shop, he goes in there, when folks say, "How are you doing?" He goes, "Better than I deserve." Well, that's the same idea. You say, "Better than I deserve," you say that a half dozen times, somebody's eventually going to say, "Why do you say that?" Well, there you go. It's being intentional about what you want to do, it's being intentional about what God is trying to accomplish through you, and it doesn't mean you have to bop people over the head. But it does mean that when God presents you with these opportunities, you take them. And when you don't take them because you're fearful, you recognize it as sin, and you confess it, and you move on, and you ask God to give you more opportunities. There's a whole world right outside that door that is going to hell, and God has placed us on this planet to glorify

Him and share the good news, and he is anxious to do that but we need to put ourselves in a position where the Holy Spirit will work with us. So let's pray for that.

Father, I just again, it's just is a gorgeous day outside we see that there it is, right out there, there's that big world that you have created. And Father, its inhabitants by and large are on their way to eternal damnation. And you have given us this incredible privilege, you have given us the words of eternal life. You've given us the sacred responsibility of glorifying you and spreading your gospel. I pray for each and every one of us here this morning, Lord, that you would give us opportunity, that you would move in our hearts, that we would have a holy passion to share the gospel, that we would be prayerfully looking at every single opportunity, waiting for the opportunity to present itself, dropping crumbs here and there by your wisdom, ready and willing to say whatever needs to be said to move people along the process of coming to know you as Lord and Savior. Lord, give us the privilege of doing just that. Give us the privilege of sharing your gospel, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.