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"JESUS CONFRONTS THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS"
John 5:19-25

Prayer: Father, we do thank you and praise you for the fact that you did look on Him and pardon us. We thank you for your incredible gift. And, Father, this morning, we want to spend this service focused on that gift, on what you've done for us, on the gift of the cross, the gift of your Son. And so I pray this morning, Lord, that you would be here with us; that your Spirit would guide us, open up our eyes, our hearts, our minds, our ears, and give us the ability to give you the worship and honor you truly deserve. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, as you know, this is the first of the month; this is the time when we worship the King and ponder his crucifixion; this is the day that we remember Jesus and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died met with his disciples and there for the last time celebrated the Passover supper. Matthew 26:26-29 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 bread and he took wine and offered them up as symbols of his flesh and blood, then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup, to symbolically do the same. Then he asked them to continue to repeat this remembrance on a regular basis. This is what we call "the Lord's table." We celebrate it once a month, and we do that by meditating first on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, by examining ourselves, by asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, by confessing our sins themselves, 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. That's what our series consists of. Last time, we talked about Jesus turning a corner, by healing someone on the Sabbath. We talked about this miracle that was centered on one particular man, in one particular place, at one particular time. The man was someone who had been crippled for 38 years and had spent all of that time waiting for a cure. The place was a pool in Jerusalem famous for healings, and it was a place that was filled with Pharisees because there was a festival taking place. It was a place where healing was certain to be noticed, and the time was the Sabbath. This is a time about which the Pharisees had constructed an elaborate set of phony rules, and it was there that Jesus very purposely does yet another

miracle. And the way that he does that miracle causes his public ministry to turn a corner. Like I said last time, it was by his design, but it changed his ministry's trajectory from ascending to descending. It's said you could argue that Jesus' march to the cross begins in earnest with this miracle, and the miracle itself is certainly one of the strangest in the Scriptures. We looked at that last time, but this time I want to focus specifically on the dialogue that takes place right after this miracle.

A man who had been crippled for decades is walking, but that is not what interests the Pharisees. That's not what angers them. Actually, what infuriates them is the fact that this miracle took place on the Sabbath. John 5:8 says:

Jesus said to him [that is, the crippled man], "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed."

Now, if ever there was a shot across the enemy's bow, it was Jesus' deliberate action right here of healing someone – not just in any way, at any time, but specifically on the Sabbath. He knew precisely how people were going to respond. Verse 15 says: *The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who made him well. For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus and sought to kill him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath.*

We will see that now instead of seeking to mollify the Jewish leaders, Jesus instead engages them in a dialogue, and it's a dialogue that settles for everyone questions about whether or not Jesus actually stated that he was God. Verse 17 says this: *But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."*

That is as blunt as an assertion of deity that Jesus could ever make, even though it doesn't look like that to us. It doesn't look like that to us because we are so used to referring to God, the Father, as Father. That just was not done in Jesus' day. Jesus' words don't really strike us like they struck the Jewish leaders, but Jesus was actually saying "My Father works without the benefit of any Sabbath rest, and so do I." John's description of the Jewish reaction proves that Jesus' words had hit home. This is how they reacted, in verse 18: *This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*

See, Jesus had indeed turned a corner. And the first thing Jesus does is to right from the start mark the very next statement that he makes as being extremely sacred and extremely serious. Jesus does not use the words "verily, verily" or "truly, truly" unless he wants his listeners to know that what he's going to say next is of extreme importance. So he says this in John 5:19: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise."*

Jesus' response here is a flat-out assertion of his absolute deity. You see, the Pharisees accused him of making himself equal to God, and he in essence says, "That's exactly who I am." But then he takes it one step further. He says, "I only do what I see the Father doing." And Jesus describes a unity of Father and Son that is so complete that he, as the Christ, couldn't possibly do otherwise. I mean, why not ask a person's shadow to act independently of that person? And Jesus is far, far more than a mere shadow of his Father. Hebrews 1:3 says that *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.*

So I just want you to picture this dialogue that's taking place between Jesus and these religious leaders. And this is not just a man speaking to little boys, this is not just the maker speaking to some of his creatures, this is not just a king speaking to his subjects. This is the Creator, the Sustainer and the Upholder of the universe, the Radiance of the glory of God! And he is speaking to a recalcitrant group of idle, worshiping phonies, hypocrites who are trying to indict him for healing someone on the Sabbath. Make no mistake about it: their goal here is not ideological purity. Their goal is far more basic than that. Their desire is quite simply to kill Jesus. That's what they want. Because he represents an existential threat, not only because he is redefining what a relationship with God is all about. He is actually demonstrating the love, the kindness, the patience, and longsuffering of God himself by virtue of this so-called dialogue that he is taking part in. I mean, Divinity is actually conversing here with humanity, and not just humanity in general but with a segment of humanity that God finds reprehensible. These are the folks that Jesus said these words to in Matthew 23:13: *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to."*

Now, just for a moment, I would like to consider the absurdity of this dialogue that Jesus is engaged in. Let's just consider there is this infinite chasm separating an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent creator who has forsaken all of these qualities to fully embrace what it means to be human, and the human beings that he's speaking with. It's like me talking to cats.

Let me just connect this on another level. I mentioned, you know, I talk to my cats all the time at home. I have conversations about how unhappy I am with their performance as mouse catchers, I have conversations about how they love to walk on my table and my countertops, and that they don't care at all about using my living room rug for a litter box. I have these conversations all the time, and Janice always leaps to their defense: "But they're so sweet, and they're so loving." I point out that, "if we could shrink you to the size of a chipmunk, they would play with you for about ten minutes, then kill you and eat you," which is what I really believe. I tell her, "it's only your size and the fact that you feed them that keeps you from being a target." And I understand all that because I think I understand cats, and I understand that cats are cats, and we are humans, and cats are just biological robots doing what they are preprogrammed to do.

But let me tell you something. We are much closer to cats than these people who were conversing with Jesus will ever be to Jesus. There's an infinite chasm between these self-deluded posers who

dare to claim to speak for God and the God of the universe who is conversing with them. Jesus knows full well that these people are looking for any opportunity that they can find to arrest him, to try him, and to execute him. These religious charlatans are engaged in an animated debate about what is the right and proper way to respond to a broken person on the Sabbath. And unbeknownst to them, they are speaking directly to the author of the Sabbath itself, the very God they claim to be defending. God himself in the person of his only begotten Son is addressing a group of people who insist that what they really, really care about is violating what they consider to be a sacred rule that they've essentially made up. "Thou shalt not heal anyone for any reason whatever on the Sabbath." So when Jesus violated their made-up rule, they became angry, and when he told them why he had violated that rule, that his Father worked on the Sabbath and so did He, they became enraged. This Jesus (who just happened to be God incarnate) was actually comparing himself with God.

Jesus is about to take them into a dialogue with the living God about the very nature of God and the nature of God's Son. He's about to bring them into the stream of his wisdom, and it is the stream that a little child can wade into safely, and a stream that a triple Ph.D. could dive into and never, ever find the bottom. The key to being able to drink from that stream is not intellectual capacity. The key is the state of your heart. Jesus said this in Mark 10:15: *"Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."*

Now, this dialogue that Jesus is about to undergo with the religious leaders is at the very least one of the fullest statements that Jesus has ever made declaring the fact that he was indeed God, and he does this five different ways. He does this by saying, "Here's who God is; and here's who I am; and they are one and the same." He starts out the conversation – as we've already seen – by stating that "God is at work and I am at work." And instantly the religious leaders know that Jesus is comparing himself to God, therefore claiming to be God. But then he takes it four steps further. Let me give you the whole dialogue. This is from John 5:18-24:

This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."

Well, as we take this apart, you're going to find that Jesus' claim here is really fivefold. What he says is "God works, and I work. God creates, and I create. God loves, and I love. God raises the dead, and I raise the dead. God is worthy of honor, and I am worthy of honor."

Now, we've already seen the Jewish leaders' response to Jesus' initial statement "God works, and I work." That was the first statement, and it actually enraged the leaders. The second one is "God creates, and I create," and that just adds to their anger.

Now, the Greek word for "creating" here is translated "to make" or "to do," and John 5:19 says: *So Jesus said to them "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise."*

Once again, what Jesus is getting at is that to separate the creative parts of the Father and Son would be like trying to separate the hands of a painter from the mind of that painter animating those hands. The Father is the word, the idea, the thought, the concept. The Son is the word made flesh. Jesus is the thought executed, the concept brought into physical reality, the word incarnate. Jesus says: "For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. God creates, and I create." The third quality Jesus shares with the father is love. Jesus says "God loves, and I love." In verse 20, he says: *"For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these he will show him so that you may marvel."*

Well, the Scripture speaks of the Father's love of the Son. But I don't see anything there about the Son's love! The reason why is that they are one and the same. You see, every single thing the Father wanted to tell us about his love, he told us in his Son. Hebrews 1:1-2 says this:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

See, this text means much, much more than simply suggesting that Jesus was God's spokesman. In effect, what God is saying is that, as the final revelation of who he is, God has spoken Jesus. That's what he said. There was nothing left to be said. His final word was Jesus. It is Jesus who speaks the love of God. You see, as we look around us, everything about creation speaks to us about God's power. Romans 1:19-20 says this:

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

You see, if you want to know about God's invisible attributes, about his eternal power and divine nature, really all you have to do is step outside. You just walk outside and you look up or down, and you will find God's eternal attributes. If you look up, you will see a heaven that declares his

glory through hundreds of billions of galaxies, and stars, and dark matter, and black holes. And if you look down you will see from a chipmunk, to an insect, to a microbe, to a subatomic particle, universes that exist within microscopic spaces that are only now just beginning to reveal their complexity.

If you want to search the entire universe for evidence of God's love, however, you're only going to find it through his Son. You see, the universe is a wonderfully complex tribute to God's power, but it is a fallen universe and it groans under the decay of its fallenness. And if it can, this universe will eat you alive.

I had a relative once, a relative by marriage, a sister-in-law, who was very taken with eastern mysticism, and with the false idea that the universe is not just a reflection of God but that the universe itself is God. And she was – I mean, she is – a very sweet girl, and she believes that the universe is love incarnate and that we bathe in that love. She insisted over and over again on lecturing my kids about that. So one day we were sitting around (this is at a family gathering), and I asked her if she had any evidence to support the notion that the universe was love incarnate, because I said everything that I see points to the notion that the universe genuinely hates you and wants to destroy you. I said that it looks to me like the universe is filled with opportunities for pain, both physical and mental, for physical decay that we can see with our own eyes as well as opportunistic microbes and diseases which if given any opportunity whatsoever will kill you. I said that, in addition, there are myriads of creatures and animals and even people who, if given the same opportunity, would also kill you without giving it a second thought. And if none of these succeed, old age and disease is going to get you in the end. So “what is your basis for claiming that this universe loves you?”

She just burst into tears. I got into a whole lot of trouble for being "mean-spirited." I thought I was just being accurate, but apparently they thought I was being mean-spirited.

You see, if you look around at this universe and you don't have those kind of rose-colored glasses on, you will find much to be awed and inspired about, but you're not going to find anything that points to the love of God. For that, you must go to the cross. The cross is what defines God's love. It defines it backwards from the very first piece of good news announced in the Garden of Eden. And even there God demonstrated his love through the cross. Genesis 3:15 says: *I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers, he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*

When we learned that, at the collapse of human perfection through Adam's rebellion, God was right there promising a rescue that was only going to come about through the cross, that was the love of God foretold right from the very beginning, and it would be on display for the entire universe. We know also that the cross looks forward to the end of time, when the whole universe acknowledges the love of God in Christ Jesus. Revelation 1:7 says: *"Look, he is coming with the*

clouds," and "every eye will see him, even those who pierced him;" and all peoples on earth "will mourn because of him." So shall it be! Amen.

You see, the centerpiece of the love of God for mankind is the cross. You can look for genuine love anywhere in this universe and you will never find it disconnected in any way from the cross. The epicenter of the universe of time and space is simply a place 2,000 years ago, somewhere just outside of Jerusalem, where God exposed himself to his own creation, allowing them to slaughter his infinite strength, his power, and his goodness in order to purchase their own redemption. That's the core basis of our faith.

The struggle that most of us have is that most of us understand that much of the life that we go through here is a life spent existing where we see through a glass darkly. We see this tiny, tiny fraction of what reality is all about. And in that vast space that remains, God simply asks us to trust him. That's what we call faith, and it is the bedrock that we operate from. And Hebrews 11:6 says that *without faith, it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

It is exquisitely easy to go down the path of blaming God for life's ills. It is a temptation that every single one of us faces all the time. To at least wonder if his love is all that it's cracked up to be, and, you know, there's only one way to reconcile the suffering that every one of us goes through in this life, to reconcile that with a loving God, and that is to fully embrace the width, the depth, the breadth, and the height of the suffering that God himself went through on the cross. That's why Jesus asked us to remember. That's what we're doing right now. Romans 5:8 says that *God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

And so Jesus tells them "God loves, and I love."

The fourth point Jesus said was "God raises the dead, and I raise the dead." Verse 21 says: *For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.*

Once again, much of the impact of that statement I think is lost on us. But again, Jesus was making another absolute statement of his deity. James Montgomery Boice points this out in his commentary on John: "This was an appeal to the Old Testament that any knowledgeable Jew would have recognized. The Old Testament taught that only God could give life or raise the dead to new life."

In Deuteronomy 32:39, God says, *"I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive."* And 1 Samuel 2:6 says: *"The Lord killeth and maketh alive: He bringeth down to Sheol and bringeth up."*

When the Syrian General Naaman came to the King of Israel to seek a cure for his leprosy because he had heard that Elijah could cure him, the King of Israel thought that Naaman was seeking a cause for quarrel and replied in despair in 2 Kings 5:7: *"Am I God, to kill and make alive?"*

Jesus was speaking in code for that time that they understood perfectly. And he couldn't have made it any plainer than when he said this in John 6:54: *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.*

Jesus is claiming he's the giver of life itself. Verse 21: *For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.* God raises the dead; Jesus raises the dead.

As the elders begin to distribute the bread, I would like to just take some time to consider Christ's claims of deity. And as the bread is being distributed, I want us also to consider this warning that I give each time, which God gives. It's from 1 Corinthians 11:28-32.

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.

I say this every month. Communion is an incredibly serious undertaking, 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, then just pass the elements on. If you have unconfessed sin that you are unwilling to confess at this point, if you have bitterness in your heart, I suggest also that you just pass the elements on.

Jesus said in Matthew 5 that if you appear at the altar and you have something against your brother, leave your gift there at the altar, go back to your brother, be reconciled and then return. This is a place to have your unfinished business with God taken care of. You can do it right here, right now. But if you can't bring yourself to do it right here and right now, don't participate in the elements.

As you meditate, consider the four points we've just looked at: God works, and Jesus works. God creates, and Jesus creates. God loves, and Jesus loves. God raises the dead, and Jesus raises the dead. Jesus and the Father are one.

1 Corinthians 11:23 says:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

As the elders begin to distribute the cup, I'd like to look at this fifth point. Jesus said in this fifth point: "God is worthy of honor, and I am also worthy of honor." Verse 22 says:

The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Right off the bat, Jesus is stating unequivocally that the Father has given the task of judgment exclusively to him. As it was Jesus who suffered the profound humiliation of the incarnation and crucifixion, so too it is fitting that Jesus would be granted the highest of honors as the judge of all mankind.

What matters most to the God, to God the Father, is the glory and honor of God the Son. And actually that's where we come in. Let me just read to you from Philippians 2:5-11:

Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men. And when he had come as a man in his external form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death – even to death on a cross. For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow – of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth – and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

As God is worthy of honor, so Jesus is also worthy of honor. As Jesus took up his Father's glory and honor as the driving force in his life, so, too, are we to take up the Son's glory and honor as the driving force in our lives.

Jesus' response to the religious leaders who challenged his right to heal on the Sabbath was that he was acting at the behest of his Father. His answers enraged the leaders and filled them with hate. We act at the behest of the Son. And we, too, can expect the very same response. John 15:18-19 says this: *“If the world hates you,”* [these are Jesus' words], *“understand that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you.”*

Communion is a very good time to ask yourself a simple diagnostic question: “Does the world love me as one of its own?” That's the question. “Does the world love you as one of its own?” Does the world see me as someone really belonging to Christ, set here to bring honor and glory to Him by the way that I live out the tasks that he's given me? Someone who understands that no matter what place I occupy in life or what tasks I have, whether it's Little League, or housework, or homework, or any other work that I engage in, that I am here to honor Him? Or am I more like some of the Jews of old who actually knew in their hearts that Jesus was Lord, but also knew that identifying with him would be costly. They knew that it would cost them a great deal, so they kept what we would call a “low Christian profile.” And God was not impressed. John 12:42-43 says: *“Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they*

would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved human praise more than praise from God.”

It is good for each of us to ask ourselves this second diagnostic question. That is, “do you love the praise of man more than you love the praise of God?” That's a tough question. Well worthy of meditation!

I firmly believe that someday we are going to discover that life itself just consisted of a series of opportunities that God gave us to honor and glorify his Son, because, you know, that's really all that God cares about, honoring his Son. Jesus summed up the first part of his dialogue with the Pharisees with this simple statement in verse 23: *Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.*

If those words apply to you – if you fear man more than God, if you want the praise of man more than the praise of God – and if you don't, therefore, honor the Son, well, I do have good news for you this morning. That good news is 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.*

It is something we can bring before God for forgiveness, for grace, for the ability to change, for the ability to repent, for the ability to move in a completely different direction. You see, I think most of us can readily see that the culture we live in today is more and more actively taking sides. And, you know, Jesus made his side so clear to the religious leaders that they had no choice but to either acknowledge him as Lord, or to seek to kill him as an existential threat. Jesus made sure to leave no room for the moderates who wanted it both ways. Those who love human praise more than they love praise from God.

Before you take the cup, I'd like us to consider the choices we've made in the past and to think of the ones we'll be making in the future.

1 Corinthians 11:25 says this:

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.”

This is the part that I call “heads, heart, and feet,” where we practically examine what it is we're doing when we say we're remembering Christ. I want to look again at that verse, verse 23: *That all may honor the Son just as they honored the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.*

You know, I said Jesus came to earth to honor and glorify his Father, and God saved us to honor and glorify his Son. I also believe that someday we're going to discover that all life really was a series of opportunities that God gave us to honor and glorify his Son, because that's really all that God cares about.

So how do you honor the Son? That's the question that we all seek to ask. What captures God's heart as honor, more than silver, gold, sacrifice, and service? What is it? What's the currency that we can use to honor the Son and thereby honor the Father? How can we honor God's Son no matter where we find ourselves in life, from palaces to prisons? Well, the answer, in a word, is trust. The answer, in another word, is faith. That's our currency for honoring our God.

As I was thinking about this, thinking about Grace Fellowship, I was amazed and delighted by how many people in this church are doing that right now. I was just thinking about the body in general. We have folks trusting God for employment who have just lost their job. We have folks trusting God for help who are struggling with chronic illnesses. We have people struggling and trusting God for peace when family members and friends are nearing the end of their life, and for forgiveness when that forgiveness has been withheld or withdrawn. We have folks trusting God for joy when depression is looming all the time. We have folks trusting God for salvation when prodigals are defying the grace of God. We have folks trusting God for hope as they're raising a disabled child. I could go on and on because there's a lot more than just that, but I would have to say I have the privilege of seeing a lot of folks give honor to the Son, and my guess is they probably don't even realize it. You see, faith that honors the Son is faith that costs you something, and it grows in community.

You know, I learn about all of these things in our corporate prayer sessions on Wednesday nights. That's the place that God gives us to display those opportunities to trust Him when it costs us something. And you know, if this sounds like a commercial, it is. Actually, what I really would love to see more than anything is I know folks – a lot of folks – cannot make it on Wednesday night, but the idea of community is that we share the burdens. There's an enormous number of burdens in this church that are shared, and the primary vehicle to share it is Wednesday night prayer. But this is also an incredibly important vehicle for all of you.

Right in the back there, we have prayer sheets. We take three families a week, and we have a bio of each family. I call them, I speak to them, I email them, I find out what it is we can be praying specifically for them. As elders, we pray separately for them as elders and then we pray corporately on Wednesday night. Then we take this list of needs that people have in this body, and we pray through them on Wednesday night.

If you're on this list, chances are something not good is going on in your life. Chances are you're struggling with some kind of illness, disease, or sickness, because you're asking for prayer. So many of the people who wind up on this list are really just people who are honoring God by trusting him, and they're inviting us to participate with them in that process.

So of course I invite you to come out Wednesday night. It would be marvelous to see our group double and triple. But if you can't make it, take this, and what I recommend all the time is to pray with us. We pray Wednesday nights starting at 7:00. If you can't make it, pray someplace in your own home Wednesday nights at 7:00. Pray in solidarity with us, identify with us so that you are

praying wherever you are when we are praying here. Grow to know the body more by taking this prayer sheet.

Let's pray.

PRAYER: Father, I do thank you. I thank you that we get to honor the Son, and by honoring the Son we get to honor the Father. Lord, I thank you that you made your claims to deity unequivocal. It just astounds me that there are cults today who make the bold-faced claim that Jesus never claimed that he was God. He did it over and over and over again. We've seen that in this dialogue that he had with these religious leaders today. Father, thank you, thank you for the Son being absolutely crystal clear about who he was: God incarnate. I pray that you would give us the ability to honor Him and thereby to honor the Father. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.