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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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He Who Has Seen Me Has Seen the Father

John 12:44-45

Prayer: *Father God, I do, I thank you and praise you for the gift that you are to us, the gift that your son is to us. Father, we just again, we pray this morning as we are opening your book on this special day, as we are looking at your life and the cross that you bore for us, we just pray that you would give us the grace, the power, and the ability by your Holy Spirit to open up your book and to understand it on a deeper level, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Once again this is the first Sunday of the month and so this is the Sunday that we remember Jesus and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples and there for the last time he celebrated a Passover supper with them. It's covered in Matthew 26 starting at verse 26. It says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the*

covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and of his blood and then he asked his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to remember this on a regular basis and this is again what we call the Lord's table. And we celebrate it once a month and we do that by meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, by examining our conscience, by asking God's Holy Spirit to show us those areas where he's convicting 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."*

We've been following the life of Christ. We've worked our way now to we're just about at the end of the 12th chapter of the Gospel of John and the passage we're going to be looking at this morning is one in which Jesus addresses an issue that I've had literally dozens of people bring up, and I know more than a few people who believe absolutely that there are really two gods described in the Bible. There are those who believe that there is the stern,

unmoving, and often times terrifying God the father of the Old Testament, and there's the warm, the loving, the caring, forgiving God the Son of the New Testament. And after all, it was God the Father who said through Moses in *Exodus 32*, this is after Moses discovered his own people worshipping this golden calf, said: *"Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor."* God the Father also said of others in *Deuteronomy 20:16*, he said: *But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction.* You know, we all sing about God giving this incredible victory to Joshua in the great battle of Jericho when the walls came tumbling down, but here's what really happened according to *Joshua 6:20*. It says: *So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city. Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword.*

We read in the Old Testament all of these dreadful judgments of God the Father and then we get to the New Testament, we see God the

Son, he's eating with sinners, he's railing against the religious rule makers and he's going out of his way to protect people who are caught, like the woman in adultery, in sins that we thought of as capital offenses. Well, is it any wonder that people think of God the Father as the mean, the scary, the nasty God and God the Son as the warm, the mellow, the forgiving God. Such a characterization is not only wrong, it is heretical. Our text this morning gives a window into why that is. It's *John 12:44-45*, it says this, it says: *And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me."* See, Jesus is fleshing out for us what he meant when he said in *John 10:30*: *"I and the Father are one."* In *Hebrews 1* it says this, it says: *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. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.*

See, the author of *Hebrews* is telling us that God has chosen in the past many, many different ways to express who he is but now God has spoken his final word, and his final word is Jesus. God spoke Jesus to us, and he spoke it to let us know exactly who he is and exactly what it is he does. You see, there are only two things you

can know about God without a special revelation from God, but those two things alone are enough to make us every one of us responsible for rejecting what we can know about God. In fact, speaking of rejecting those truths, this is what Paul says in *Romans 1:19*. He says: *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.* What God is saying is that, first of all, everyone, every single person born knows inherently deep down inside that there is a God. It's part of our DNA. It's part of what we were created with. And secondly, every one of us knows that his eternal power is self-evident. You know, you cannot stand on his earth, breathing in his air, experiencing his creation and pretend that all of this happened by chance. Or perhaps you can. That's exactly what the vast majority of people do. And naturalistic evolution claims exactly what it is that God forbids, that there was no God whatsoever involved in all of creation and that every single thing that we feel or see or experience came about strictly by random chance in an enormous passage of time.

Whenever I find myself speaking with someone who believes this and those who insist that what we believe in creation is a myth, well, I usually like to ask where the initial stuff came from that we

supposedly came from. I mean, we can take it all the way back to this infinitesimally small piece of matter that existed right before the big bang and ask folks where did that stuff come from? I mean, if we came from some kind of primordial soup that evolved from that stuff, then you're going to have to explain to me where that stuff came from, because if you can't explain where that stuff came from, then according to me you've got the myth of "primordial stuff." Of course according to you I've got the myth of "In the beginning God." And now it's a matter of just deciding whose myth more closely matches the truth. I mean, I say in the beginning, God. Evolution says in the beginning, stuff. I mean, we all know that God is self-sustaining and had no beginning and that's part of who God is, it's part of who God is, was, and always will be. And it seems to me just bizarre beyond belief that we would ascribe the same creative powers to the stuff that gave rise to this primordial soup, but that's what evolution is forced to do. I mean, I think what is really happening here is that the desire innate in people, in fallen souls, the desire inside is so strong to have no God whatsoever rule over me, that any scenario that provides a glimmer of that hope is the one that people will cling to no matter how silly it is. I mean, there are only two things that every person on earth can know about God and that is his eternal power and divine nature, and we've turned those two things into fairy tales. It's breathtaking how specifically and aggressively we shake our

fist in God's face in this area. And God in response says, so they are without excuse.

God gave every one of us the basics of knowing who he was and the word of God gives us the ability to go beyond that. Jesus as well also gives us the ability to genuinely know God. And our text this morning, it's really Jesus summing up his purpose in coming to earth, it's really a summation of his ministry, it's one of the final statements that he's making to the public and he starts out by saying: *"Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me."* What Jesus is saying is you look at me and you're going to see the Father. I mean, God the Father and God the Son are absolutely distinct but it is critically important to understand that at the same time they are one. It's critically important to understand that the very same God who told Moses to say to those who would dare worship another god: *"Put your sword on your side each of you and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor."* This very same God is the God who's calmly wiping the spit of a leering Roman soldier from his cheek. The same God who said of the Canaanites: *You shall save alive nothing that breathes but you shall devote them to complete destruction* is the very same God who was calmly accepting being beaten and mocked for the entertainment

of those same soldiers. Luke described it in *Luke 22:63*, he said: *Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. 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.* You see, unless you truly see the Son in the Father and see the Father in the Son, you will be forever tempted to split them into two gods, one who rules over the Old Testament and the other who rules over the New.

As the elders begin distributing the bread, I would like us to consider this morning how you and I understand that the God of the Old and the New Testaments is one and the same God. Consider also this morning the warning that God gives about communion itself. Let me just read it to you. This is 1 Corinthians 11. It says: *But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* You know, I give out this warning every single month. It's to say this, is that communion is extremely serious business and if you enter into it in an unseemly manner, it is a matter of courting disaster, and that if

you are not absolutely confident that you belong to him, that you're one of his own, that you are a child of the King or if you first need to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you bring your sacrifice to the altar, then do not participate, just pass the elements on and nobody's going to look at you strangely. On the other hand, we also say that you can make the mistake of thinking that you're absolutely spotless -- unless you're absolutely spotless and perfect, you're not really worthy to receive this communion. The devil loves that as well, that's too -- that's also a mistake, because being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin, it doesn't mean that you never fail. It means that you recognize that salvation is a gift and no one is ever capable of earning that gift.

I quote each month Dane Ortlund because he puts it so well. He says: "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." I mean this means also that in addition when we fail, because we are one of his, we are aware that we've sinned because God is now living inside us and his Holy Spirit is convicting us. And so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us and he said so in *1 John 1:9*, he said: *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 does not mean that we are without sin. It just means that when we sin, we understand we have an advocate with the Father, someone who speaks 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 because we have Jesus's righteousness and not our own, we are now free to eat at his table. So if you love the Lord and if you are one of his, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased for you at the cost of his own blood. He lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so that we could be made worthy of heaven.

As the elements are being passed out, take some time right now to ask yourself: Do I have the same ideas about God that the world has? I mean, do I think of the Old Testament Father God as stern, unyielding, unloving, and unmerciful while God the Son in the New Testament is exactly the opposite? If I think that, I really do need to confess it, because it's a slander on God's reputation. Jesus is absolutely distinct from the Father but he's also one with the Father in character, in attributes, and in holiness. As God the Son himself said in our text this morning: *"Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me."* Take a moment and think on those words.

1 Corinthians 11, chapter 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." Take, and eat.

It was Jesus's mission to glorify his Father. And "to glorify" really means to make manifest God's character and his attributes. That means to put on display who God is and what he does. Jesus spent much of his life and ministry doing just that, but there's much evidence to suggest that our hardened hearts had a very hard time receiving that. Just consider this incident. This happened in *John 14*. Jesus says this: *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going."* Thomas said to him, *"Lord, we did not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"* Jesus said to him, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."* Now you may notice that these words are actually very, very familiar. I mean, we're looking at

John 14 right now but we are back in John chapter 12 we're two chapters back and yet Jesus is still saying the same thing. He says: *"Whoever sees me sees him who sent me."* Once again Jesus is explaining to the disciples that to know him is to know the Father. And this is not the first time that Jesus has had this discussion. This is an ongoing thing. I mean, we saw the same topic being discussed in the eighth chapter of John's gospel and there Jesus is saying the exact same thing but he's saying it to a very hostile audience. This is *John 8:18*. Jesus says: *"I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me."* They -- this is the crowd -- said to him therefore, *"Where is your Father?"* Jesus answered, *"You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."* You see, Jesus was telling his beloved disciples before since you know me, you know the Father. Now he's telling this hostile crowd of unbelievers the exact opposite, he's saying since you don't know me, you don't know the Father. The discussion about knowing fathers by their sons goes downhill from there and it says this in *John 8:38*, Jesus says: *"I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."* They answered him, *"Abraham is our father."* Jesus said to them, *"If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are doing the*

works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one father -- even God."

You know, I read this and you have to take a step back and just consider the lunacy of this conversation that's taking place. You have religious leaders arguing about the nature of God with God. It's just bizarre. And they're holding forth all of these amazing opinions that they have and they're talking to God, then they're starting to speak about their relationship to the God the Father to the literal Son of God. It's just bizarre. And the crowd hates this comparison that Jesus has made. They have no answer to give to him, so they go for the ad hominem attack and they put into words what many of them already thought they understood or at least they gave -- they gave sound and speech to the notion that Jesus was illegitimate. I mean the crowd knew that Mary had born Jesus too soon after their marriage for Jesus to be conceived within the time frame that they understood as legitimate, and they had no idea that Mary had conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and not by some earthly means, so they were happy to conclude that Jesus was born of sexual immorality. Jesus is non plussed. In verse 42 it says: *Jesus said to them, "If God were your father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me."* See, whether Jesus expresses it positively or negatively, it's still the same thing. What he's

saying is to know him is to know the Father. And the sad truth though is that whether it's positive or negative, believer or non-believer, Jesus' revelation to his father -- of his Father still fell on blind eyes and deaf ears.

I just want to repeat Jesus's conversation with John -- in *John 14* because it sets up a truly awful conversation that takes place afterwards. This is *John 14*. Again I'm repeating. Jesus says: *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."*

Jesus is once again, he's emphatically restating that to know him is to know the Father and he's stating it to the disciples who have seen him and known him and therefore the Father for over three years. And this is very close to the end of Jesus's life. It's the end of his ministry. And so Philip responds to Jesus and what he says is as close to a kick in the teeth that his disciples could

have ever given him. Philip says to him, "*Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.*" What a disastrously awful thing for Philip to say. See, my guess it was far more painful for Jesus to hear that than all of the mocking and bitter hatred that he heard from the Pharisees. You see, in one monumentally ignorant statement, Philip basically indicates that three years of seeing Jesus heal the sick, feed the hungry, even raise the dead had almost no effect whatsoever on their understanding of why Jesus was even there in the first place. I mean, for three years now Jesus had lived among the disciples, he had traveled with them, he had eaten with them, he had spent many a night sleeping under the stars with no home between them as a means of expressing the love of God through Christ Jesus. And Philip in one single sentence basically says, it was all for naught. "*Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.*" I picture Jesus kind of with his eyes closed maybe, you know, talk about a face plant, it's one of these things, you just -- you cannot believe what you've heard, and I picture Jesus exactly in that way, and he responds in verse 9, he says: "*Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.*" Almost sounds like he wants to shout it. "*How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?*" "Show us the Father"? Jesus has shown them the love of the Father beginning with his incarnation. By his willingness to enter into the womb of a peasant girl so he could share the very

same stuff that we are made of. He did that to show us the Father. He not only showed us his love, he showed us his joy when he submitted to baptism and the heavens opened up and the Father said: *"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."* Jesus did that to show us the Father. And it wasn't just love and joy, Jesus showed us the Father's peace when he offered us that very same peace in *John 14:27*, he said: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you."* He did that to show us the Father. Jesus showed us the Father's patience when he calmly debated with mockers and schemers that he could have annihilated with one look. He did that to show us the Father. He showed us the Father's kindness when he reached out to the poor and the sick and the hungry and the diseased and the marginalized and he did that to show us the Father. He showed us the Father's goodness when he challenged his contemporaries to find one single sin in his life and found no takers, and he did that to show us the Father. Jesus showed us the Father's meekness when the heavens remained silent while he was being mocked. And Jesus showed us the Father's gentleness when the heavens remained silent while he was being beaten. And Jesus showed us the father's self-control when the heavens remained silent while he was being crucified. The love, the joy, the peace, the patience, the kindness, the goodness, the meekness, the gentleness, and self-control of Jesus was all a reflection of his Father. But by and large by all appearances, all

of his efforts at reflecting his Father have appeared to have failed. I mean, at this point in Jesus's ministry he has no choice but to face the fact that even his own disciples were dull of hearing and hard of heart. And in spite of three years of intimate contact with God himself in the flesh, they still have no idea at all about the character and the attributes of God. I mean, there's almost a tone of incredulity in Jesus's words as he responds to Philip's statement. He says this in verse 10: *"Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves."* You know, it seems to me like absolute frustration in what Jesus is saying and he's saying if you don't believe me because of my character, at least believe me because of my attributes, at least believe me because of what you've seen me do. But even that wasn't enough. I mean, the disciples had seen Jesus heal the sick, feed the hungry, raise the dead, they saw exactly what Jesus could do and they also saw day in, day out what Jesus would do, the fruits of the Spirit perfectly expressed by the way Jesus lived his life, and yet all of that still fell short of revealing God to them. Something was missing. They were missing something that every believer in Christ Jesus today has and we have it as a seal and guarantee. It's God's Holy Spirit.

As the elders begin distributing the cup, just consider for a moment Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 1:21, he says this: *And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. See, we would do well to remember that without God's Holy Spirit no one, no one will ever come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Jesus said this in John 15:26, he said: "But when the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."* In John 16:12 he said: *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."*

You see, before God sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples had no hope whatsoever of lining up the dots and making all of this stuff start to make sense. But after the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost, the disciples got it, and they got it in the same way that you and I get it when the Spirit opens up our eyes, our hearts, and our minds. And that's why we say salvation

is a gift and a miracle. Without the gift and without that miracle, getting someone to understand and accept the gospel is an absolutely hopeless task. But we have been gifted. We have the witness of the Holy Spirit. And now we bear the witness of the Holy Spirit. Again *John 15:26*: *"He will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."* See, just as Jesus came to give flesh and blood expression of who God the Father was, so we too now today, we give flesh and blood expression to who the Son is. *John 12:44*: *Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me."* And what Jesus did for the Father we now do for the Son.

So here's my question for us this morning. Very simple. Do people look at you and see Jesus Christ? That's the question. Or do they look at you and after seeing you, knowing you, and interacting with you, would they ask you if you know anything about this Jesus of Nazareth guy? I mean, Jesus perfectly expressed who the Father was but he did it to those who were dull of heart and dull of spirit. It's only after the Holy Spirit came that it all began to make sense. And our task is to present Christ to a world that is also dull of heart and dull of spirit, but God promises us the same Holy Spirit to make those words make sense. That's not our burden; it's his. So the question we have to ask ourselves this morning is do

our lives reflect the God we are called on to represent? Again Jesus says: *"He will bear witness about me,"* speaking of the Holy Spirit but then he says: *"And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."* Take a few moments and ponder those words. *1 Corinthians 11:25* says: *In the same manner he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."* Take and drink.

This is the part of the service that I call heads, heart, and feet. This is the time where we address some of the practical application of what -- of what it means to remember Christ. I want to take this time this particular month to address some very big news that I'm sure all of you have heard during this past week because it has to deal directly with how we represent Jesus Christ. I want to address the name of Caitlyn or Bruce Jenner. Is there anybody here who doesn't know who that is? I mean, he was an Olympic athlete in the 70's who has just undergone an operation -- or not an operation, right now he's just undergone the chemical treatments or whatever to become transgendered. He is now considered Caitlyn Jenner. I think it's important to us to understand this not just because it's a big news item but because it is most likely an area in which you and I are going to have to give an account to someone. And there are two different places in which we will be able to give

this account. There's a safe place, that's your families, the church, among your Christian friends, and there's a not so safe place where you're going to be asked to give an account. That's the workplace, that's with your non-Christian friends and associates, and I'm much more concerned about that response. What do we say to those who say, "What do you think of Bruce/Caitlyn Jenner?" Well, there's a terrific article on The Gospel Coalition website, it's written by Alex Duke. I'd just like to sum it up, and he says there are three main points to bear in mind when we share the hope that is in us about Caitlyn Jenner. He says, number one, expect disagreement at best, malice on average, downright hostility at worst. Second, whatever you say, make sure it's true, gentle, and respectful. And three, always remember Jesus is Lord. You see, for better or for worse, folks who hopefully are seeing you as Christ, seeing you as representing Christ are going to ask how this fits into our understanding of the gospel. We need to answer openly, kindly, and honestly, and we need not to expect to be patted on the back for it.

You know, the other big news item of this week is the Duggars. Anybody here doesn't know who the Duggars are? I didn't know them from beans, to tell you the truth, till couple of weeks ago but they are a reality family with 19 kids and one of the kids was accused of being sexually inappropriate to his sisters. And this

blew up into a huge, gigantic scandal and I just was -- I was made aware of it by seeing how viciously this family was attacked, and I saw them being interviewed. And after the interview I thought, well, these people did everything right. They had a terrible thing happen in their family and it seems to me they did everything biblically, prayerfully, correctly, and they have been savaged by the media. And I just looked at them and I said, if you want to know what active hostility towards the gospel really looks like, just look at the Duggars. See how the world has pounced on this family tragedy simply because they represent living for the gospel.

See, we have to understand right from the start that the world hates God. I don't mean to say that in a nasty way. The world -- look, the world loves the gods that it makes and the gods that it fashions and shapes into the god, the world loves that god but it hates the real God. The world hates the real Jesus. And it loves the jesuses -- there's dozens of different jesuses that the world creates, it loves those jesuses. It hates the real Jesus and it hates the real gospel. And I'm not just saying that. Let me just read you what Jesus himself said in *John 15:18*, he said: *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."* Much of that hatred is going to

bleed off to you and me. And this is one of the opportunities that it's going to have to do just that, that is, if we attempt to accurately represent the gospel.

So let me just give you a summation of what Duke writes about how we respond to this Caitlyn Bruce Jenner issue. He says, "Number one, expect disagreement." He said, "Assuming you speak up anywhere other than the friendly confines of your church or Christian friend groups, you should expect to be found heartily disagreeable. Expect to be misrepresented and misunderstood, perhaps even ostracized and belittled. The weight that you feel is the cross you're called to bear. It's been enjoyably light for so long, at least where I live, but that's increasingly no longer the case. What once felt like floating through space will soon feel like walking below sea level." Secondly, he says: "Whatever you say, make sure it is true, gentle, and respectful." Again Duke says this, he says: "Shortly after the *Vanity Fair* cover released, I saw two basic responses proliferate across the Internet: Undiluted praise and undiluted parody. Now surely few of us were tempted by the former. But the latter carries some appeal. I mean after all, these are strange times, and it's right to want to disarm the unrelenting strangeness by giggling in its face, sneering at its narrative and eventually meme-ing it to death. But by God's grace, let's do better. Instead, let's 'speak the truth

in love' (Ephesians 4:15). Let's speak 'with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience' (1 Peter 3:16)." He says: "Part of speaking the truth in love means reminding ourselves that it is unloving to stay silent as human beings -- image bearers of God -- languish in their sin. So telling the truth means telling people that gender reassignment surgery is wrong, that it's an affront to God's good design, but telling the truth in love means saying so not via juvenile online jabs but over a meal or on the phone, not through clenched teeth but through sad eyes. Telling the truth means telling the world what it just might already know, that no amount of surgical reconstructing or dexterous Photoshopping will remake or beautify Bruce's self-inflicted wounds on his way to becoming Caitlyn. But telling the truth in love means listening, really listening, when other Caitlyns tell you why their Bruces refuse to go, why they always felt like imposters in their own skin until that skin was sovereignly rearranged and knit back together fearfully and wonderfully made another way, their way. Telling the truth means telling today's prophets and pundits -- those who call death 'life,' who call tragedy 'victory,' and who are exclaiming 'Peace! Peace!' when it should be crying 'Ruin! Ruin!' -- telling the truth to these people means begging them to lift their eyes and behold their Creator. It means begging them to put down their cameras and their scalpels and their keyboards and to recognize that with every flash of the bulb and

stitch of the knife and stroke of the finger, they are more and more and more without excuse, just like those of us who've seen that *Vanity Fair* cover. What does it look like to tell this truth in love? And is it even possible?" That leads to his third point which he says: "Always remember, always remember: Jesus is Lord." He says: "In all of this, our reason for hope is the same reason that he we can tell hard and unpopular truths in love, and that's because Jesus is Lord." He says: "We endure the inevitable derision because Jesus is Lord. We endure the frothing accusations of hypocrisy, of having no right to judge someone we don't know, because Jesus is Lord. We pray also that those who speak ill of our deny the design of God would be ashamed of their slander. We pray for the freedom of repentance. We pray such profligate misuse of God's creation would deceive fewer and fewer and fewer, that the celebration of self-mutilation would cease. Because Jesus is Lord, we pray that the hissing snake of the sexual revolution, even as it's greedily eating its own tail, will soon have its head crushed. Yes, because Jesus is Lord, we also pray for Caitlyn Jenner. We pray because we know that all those the Father have given the Son will come, and whoever comes to the Son will never be cast out (John 6:37). We pray Caitlyn would become the fruition of 1 Peter 2:12 -- one who saw good deeds among Christians and responded by glorifying King Jesus on the day of his visitation. We pray Caitlyn would experience a true and better metamorphosis, one not

wrought by human design or a doctor's hands but by the Spirit of God, to the praise of his glorious grace."

You see, we saw this morning that our basic task is to bear the image of our Savior. He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and they hated him without a cause. We are starting to see some of that hatred bleed off down into our lives. This is our challenge. This is our culture, and this is our time. By God's grace and by God's power we will live up to it. Let's pray.

Father God, I just thank you that in times that are so -- for want of a better word -- bizarre, where things just pass for normal that just years ago, just months ago would have seemed unbelievably unnormal, Lord, we are called on by your grace, by your power, by your salvation to represent you to this world that is dying. Give us the grace and the courage to speak the truth in love, kindly, to speak the truth in a way that is understandable, and to speak the truth in a way that understands that it doesn't matter if we're misunderstood or if we receive hostility in return because Jesus is Lord. Give us that grace, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.