



A Seat at the Table

Pastor Jerry Gillis – September 3, 2017

So, in my reasonably young life, I've had the privilege of preaching in a lot of countries all over the world. About thirty at this point in my life everywhere. And one of the things that I've found is that all of these places have unique cultures. And sometimes you can understand at least at a macro, kind of a really generalized level, you see some similarities in all cultures even though they may show themselves slightly different.

In fact, in most cultures that there are in the world, they have some sense of what we would call an honor or a shame culture. For instance, if you're in the Far East, then you kind of have the honor/shame culture show itself in what we would call "face". So in other words, it's you save or you lose face or you gain face or you keep face, that's kind of the idea in the honor-shame culture of the Far East, and I'm speaking generally at this point. In the Middle East, it's different because what happens in the Middle East is that if they feel in any way that their honor has been disrespected in any way, they're willing to be a little more aggressive and fight for their honor and those kinds of things, and they'll let you know about that. In places like Africa, where I have been as well, their honor-shame culture is more tribal. In other words, they don't want to bring shame on their ancestors. They

want to bring honor to their tribal name and to the name of their ancestors. And then of course, you know, in Latin America, you've got a number of different things that describe kind of honor and shame. You've got kind of their economic identity in terms of their honor, and then kind of the machismo of Latin America that I've had the opportunity to see. And the awesome food, by the way.

So it kind of shows itself in all these places. What my concern has more to do with Western culture and how this effects what we are in Western culture. And if you look at the matrix of kind of honor and shame in the Western culture that we're in, here's how it shows itself. It shows itself in a culture of offense. Now that's not my term, it's a term that's been used but it's a reasonably decent term. We live in a culture that is offended all the time. We're always offended. And if we're not, we look for ways to get offended. We are on the offense in terms of looking for offense. When anyone says anything publicly at all, we're going to find something that can offend us potentially because it feels good to us. And when I'm saying us I don't necessarily mean you unless it applies to you. I'm just speaking in general broad terms, so don't get too weirded out, right?

But we are in an offense culture where everyone's offended by everything. And in fact, the culture at large kind of feels good about it, and there's a reason. Because it appeals to our pride and to our sense of moral superiority. That I'm this and you are this. I would never, yet you do. It's that kind of idea, right? This idea of a culture of offense. Now, that's not to say, by the way, and I don't want you to misunderstand. There are things in our culture that are certainly, unquestionably offensive. We don't have to

look much farther than just a few weeks ago in Charlottesville to figure that out, right? That there are things in our culture that are offensive.

When people of one race, in this case white, who are endeavoring to describe and to demonstrate that they should be, in their minds, superior to every other race. That is something that the nation, in terms of its ideology is going to reject, but as Christians, we need to all the more understand that that is inconsistent with everything that we believe. Because we believe in a Creator God who has made everyone, every human being in His image, which means that there is an inherent worth and dignity in every single human being, and they ought to be treated as such. And it also offends our sensibilities of understanding the Gospel. That what this good news of what God has done, He has done for the world, for every color and tribe and people and language and tongue according to the Scripture, that this Good News is for every man, woman and child.

So, there's no question that there are things in our culture to which offense happens, believe me. But we are living in a culture that's kind of conditioning us to be offended all the time, and I'm concerned about that on a number of different levels, because I'm concerned about what that does to poison the soil of the Gospel in Western culture. That when we have that kind of thinking and that kind of idea, I think it causes the soil of the Gospel to be poisoned, so to speak, kind of in our culture and in individual hearts. And that's a concern for me.

Because what it does, here's how it poisons our soul. We, because we live in an offense culture have come to make God in our own image so that God

won't offend us either. It's amazing how God agrees with everything I agree with. Isn't that something? Why? Because I've created God in my own image, and I'm speaking generally here. As a culture we sometimes create God in our own image, so that nothing can offend us. And what that does is it causes us to have an idea of the way in which we can approach God. That we can come to Him on our own terms, any way that we want and do anything that we want because certainly God is going to agree with everything we agree with because we invented Him. This is what happens when you kind of live in a culture that's imbibing this kind of idea.

But it's also kind of the way that we approach God is maybe along the lines of what we do is we assert our rights with God. That we can tell God whatever we want to tell Him, however we want to tell Him and we just assert our rights with God, because certainly He's not going to do anything to offend us. So we can just tell Him what our rights are, that we deserve these things. That's what happens in a culture of offense, right? We deserve things. We're already full of pride and full of moral superiority, so we actually deserve things. So we're going to tell God, we're going to tell Him what our rights are.

And so if it doesn't happen, by the way, what we do in our culture of offense, if somebody does something that we find their offense, we look for their offense, everything they say is offensive, what we do is we gather a bunch of people to publicly shame them. We don't even have to know them. We can do it online. And I'm wondering if that kind of idea translates more into the way that we think about God. I know this is a silly example, but it's almost like we say to God, "Hey God, I'm a pretty decent person. I'm

really good. Look at all the things that I'm mad at. Look at all the things that I'm offended by. And look how great I am and look at how morally superior I am to everyone that's around me. Oh yeah, and by the way, I know I'm a pretty decent person because I'm way better than so and so. You know them, right? Please! Please. I know I'm better than them. So, give me stuff! And if you don't, I will tell all 213 of my Twitter followers, and we will publicly shame you on the internet. We'll start telling people you don't even exist!"

This is what happens when our cultural soil gets poisoned by this kind of culture of offense. And it's into this culture that I want to introduce a woman. She doesn't, she does have a name, we just don't know what it is. We meet her in Mark's gospel. And before we get there, I want to explain where we're going to be in the context surrounding it. You see, Jesus and His disciples were working hard.

Mark's gospel is called the "action gospel" by a lot of theologians because here's what you see in Mark's gospel. You see the word "immediately" all the time. Like immediately, and then they did this and then immediately they did this, and then immediately they did, I mean literally it's like a gospel of Red Bull. Like when you read Mark's gospel, you feel like what's going on is that Jesus does this and then goes. This is what's going on in Mark's gospel. Immediately. It's called the action gospel, right? Good luck with the camera operators. If I'm out of breath, is that a problem right now? Because I'm nearly forty-eight at this point and I should probably stop doing this.

So they're really busy, they're doing all kinds of ministry, right? And they're tired. They're so tired they don't know what to do with themselves. In fact, look at what it says in Mark's gospel in chapter number 6: "The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to Him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going they didn't even have a chance to eat," here's what Jesus said to them: "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

Okay, good. So the disciples need some rest and Jesus says you know what? Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to promise you, you're going to get some rest, alright? So here's what they do as you read Mark's gospel. They try and, you know, leave. But people follow them, everywhere they go, like they're in the Galilee region, right, wherever they go, people follow them. In fact, so many of them follow them and they hung around and were listening to Jesus, and the disciples are tired and they had been busy. But they ended up, they were hungry and so Jesus fed them with just a little bit of bread and a little bit of fish. There were five thousand men plus women and children and Jesus took care of them all. It was extraordinary.

And then they thought okay, well maybe we can get in a boat and go to the other side and we can go get some rest there. And they got into the boat and then a storm came. Then the disciples, you know, they're chugging against the wind, doing whatever they can, right. Jesus comes walking on the water. They're all freaking out, like it's a ghost, that's what they said. And so they're scared, right? They get to the other side, there's Pharisees waiting on them on the other side, and they have to debate with the

pharisees about all kinds of stuff because the Pharisees like to debate about all kinds of stuff.

And then finally what Jesus does is He carts them up and He takes them really far north. He's like we're really getting out of here. And they go to a place called Tyre. T-Y-R-E. And finally they get to a place where they can kind of hide. Here's what it says in Mark chapter 7: "Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet He couldn't keep His presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about Him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at Jesus' feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. And she begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter."

Now, as best we can tell in the New Testament, this may be the only time recorded in Jesus' ministry where He actually goes outside of the boundary of Israel. So now He's outside of Israel, which Jesus basically never did in all of the recorded ministry of Jesus that we have - this may be the only time. And when He goes there He's probably staying in the home of a friend, my guess is that they were probably from a Jewish background living in a Gentile or a Greek territory. I don't know that for sure, but that's the likelihood. And so while they're there they're going to relax, right? They're going to be able to eat, they're going to be able to chill out and kind of get a little bit of rest because they have been super, super busy. And Jesus' reputation apparently had preceded Him into the town. And there's a woman who comes outside and she is begging because she's got a demon-possessed daughter back at her house, however long she walked to

get there. And she's wanting Jesus to see her. We'll find out soon that the disciples, as we see in another passage in just a moment, they wanted to send her away because they're trying to rest, right? They've been doing all of this everyday, like this is what they've been doing, and they're tired.

And so she's begging and she's trying to get in to see Him. And it's interesting because the place that she comes from and that region of Tyre and Sidon, that was a place of paganism. It was a place where there were lots of different types of gods and lots of different types of sorcerers and magicians and kind of mystic healers that would go around all the time, kind of making their money doing these things. And I wonder if Jesus thought, "is that what she's looking for". In fact, by His response to her, it gives me a good indication that He was testing the waters with her a bit. Because when we read Matthew's account we begin to see how He deals with this. Look at what it says in Matthew 15: "Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to Him, crying out, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.'" Here's how Jesus responded: "Jesus did not answer a word."

Some of you are going "wow, why?" Well, rabbis had a sense in that day-in-age of using silence as a testing and a teaching mechanism. Very interesting, in fact. She's crying out and Jesus doesn't say a word. He just is silent. And silence was a way for a rabbi to be able to kind of test the waters. Is she really looking for someone like me, or is she just looking for some other sorcerer or magician or some pagan idolatrous kind of performer? What was she really looking for? He was testing how serious

she was. We find out in the text that she's really serious. The Bible actually says that she was begging to see Jesus. And when you read that in the original language, in the Greek language, it's in an ongoing tense which means that she wasn't just begging, she didn't just say one time. It means she kept on begging to be able to see Jesus. She just wanted to see Him, and she wanted to talk to him. And she apparently believed in what He could do and maybe even in who He was since His reputation had preceded Him to this point.

And then Jesus finally breaks His silence and addresses her. Notice what He says. Mark chapter 7. He said to her: "First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." I'll take a sip of water, because some of you are already offended for her. How dare Jesus call her a dog! Does He have no sensibilities? Does He have no sensitivity? Has He not been to sensitivity training school? I'm going to look and see, because if He's on Facebook, I'm reporting this as hate speech! And if He's got any of His teaching up on YouTube in videos, I'm going to make sure they take it down! Because He just called this woman a dog!

Take it easy, offense culture. What Jesus said to her was not an insult. It was a parable. A short story. A metaphor. It's how they talked in those days. And what's interesting about it is when He addresses her that way, she actually understood. She wasn't actually offended. Because what Jesus was doing was telling her a story that was happening right in front of her eyes. He was saying something to her, which Jesus did all the time, remember? Sometimes He might be out in a field, and He starts telling a

story about farmers sowing seed and harvesting. And people are able to kind of look over the landscape and see kind of how He's illustrating what He's illustrating. He's doing the same thing here.

Picture the scene with me. Jesus is in a home. There's a family that's hosting Him. I don't know the full make-up of the family, I'm kind of guesstimating here but my guess is the disciples are sitting around the table about to maybe be able to eat or maybe they have started eating. The family has some children that are sitting around as well. And the children are also eating. And this woman is yelling out for them. And while they're eating they're also there and they probably have a puppy. You say Jerry, come on, seriously! Is this your imagination run wild? No, it's not at all, because the term that Jesus used when He was telling the story was exactly that term. He did not use the term for dog that is an outside mangy scavenging dog. He used the term in the diminutive form of the Greek which means pet, puppy, that's what He's talking about. Glad you're offended, right? That's what He was saying, He was telling a story.

And so there you have the puppy who is playing probably under the table as they all do, those of you who have dogs know that when you're eating, they don't stay away unless you lock them up, right? They're looking for a little grub themselves, right? So they're hanging around at your feet and you know, biting you and jumping on you and doing all that kind of stuff. You're like "in a minute"! And so Jesus tells a very simple story where He basically says to this woman, "the children eat first, the puppy eats later". She wasn't offended, she understood. The reason I know that she understood is because of what she said in response. Jesus said "First let the

children eat all they want," He told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." "Lord", she replied, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then He told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter." Jesus was impressed with her response.

What's interesting, the reason that I know that she understood what Jesus was doing is because she answered Him, listen to this, she answered Him within the story. That's how I know she got it. She wasn't confused. Jesus told her a story, she answered Him within the story, "Oh yes, Jesus that's true". She doesn't argue, it's true, the children eat first, the family eats first and then the dogs or the pets or the puppies, they eat later. That's true, but when the dog's hanging out under the table, sometimes the crumbs fall and they get to eat at the same time as the family. And Jesus is like "ha, ha, ha, love this lady! I love her faith! I love this woman's faith! She believes that my leftovers are better than any meal she's ever had in her life that the world has offered her! And she says to me, 'I can eat too, but I can just eat crumbs and they're going to be enough.'"

You see, Jesus on kind of one surface level here in this passage of Scripture is saying something very straight forward and very simple. He's basically saying to her, "I made a promise that I'm not going to leave my disciples, because I promised them that I would let them rest, and that we would be able to rest. And so I can't go with you to your house for your daughter." And she's like no, no, no, it's okay because if I just got some crumbs, I know that there's plenty of food on this table. She's staying within the story. And Jesus is like "whew, this lady, she understands, she has faith." And Jesus

says, "you can go, your daughter is healed". He didn't even have to leave. He just stayed here honoring His promise, but by her faith her daughter was healed right then! It is an extraordinary thing that Jesus is doing. And this woman really understands some things that I think that maybe the disciples didn't even understand as we look at the story.

Why do I say that? Because, listen to this... the disciples just maybe a few days prior, when they were in the Galilee region had just experienced Jesus taking a little bit of bread and a little bit of fish and feeding five thousand people. And then Jesus, when they're all fed says to His disciples, "hey, pick up your baskets, go get all the leftovers." And they go and they fill up all of these leftovers. And do you know what the Bible actually says after that? It says that their hearts were so hard they didn't even understand what was going on. In other words, Jesus is trying to help them understand. He's not just sufficient. He's more than sufficient for everything that they ever would need, ever! They got to see a little bit of bread and a couple little fish be multiplied to feed thousands of people. And it wasn't just enough for the people, there was more than enough for them! And this woman, she understood that. And the disciples didn't even understand it. So Jesus is not only meeting her need while still honoring His promise, He's also teaching His disciples something while she's there. It's a really, really beautiful picture.

But, it goes deeper, just like it does always with Jesus. Whenever He's doing something, He does something that's really plain and simple, straight-forward, but there's always something else that's going on when He's teaching. In fact, when we start to look at Matthew's gospel, notice

how it fills in the gaps for us. It says: "Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon and a Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to Him crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.' And Jesus didn't answer a word. So His disciples came to Him and urged Him, send her away for she keeps crying out after us." Right? They were tired, they were supposed to be resting. And Jesus answered: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." And the woman came and knelt before Him. "Lord, help me!" she said. And He replied, "It's not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." "Yes, it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." And then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that very moment."

You see, Jesus said something really interesting to His disciples. His disciples were like, "Lord, send her away. We're supposed to be resting. Send her away!" And Jesus said, "I've just come for the lost sheep of Israel." Now, number one, He's not in Israel at this point. He's outside the boundaries of Israel. And what He's referring to is He's referring to His messianic vocation, that this is what the Messiah was going to do. Listen carefully, the Messiah was going to come through Israel to be Israel's representative. That Jesus, God with flesh on, born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit, was coming because Israel was supposed to do something in their vocation as a people that they failed to do.

In other words, Israel was supposed to demonstrate the glory of God through them so that those Gentiles would have the glory of God

distributed to them. And now Jesus, who is the representative of Israel, where Israel fell down on the job, he is now the perfect Israelite, is demonstrating to them, his disciples, that he has come for the lost sheep of Israel, because he is the Messiah. He is the one from Israel that has been promised through all of the prophets, through all of the Old Testament, that has been foretold. But what he came to do - listen to this - was to demonstrate the glory of God through Israel, who he is representing, to those who are non-Israel, the Gentiles. Like this lady. Like me and you. It's extraordinary what he's teaching in this context. And it's extraordinary what maybe they're starting to learn.

In other words, he was saying it this way. Israel eats first. The Gentiles will eat later. Israel eats first, and the Gentiles will get to eat later. The disciples didn't get it in that moment. They didn't get a lot in that moment. And don't laugh at them. Because if you were there, you wouldn't have got it in that moment probably either, right? We always look back on them and a go, these dudes are like hello? Anyone home? But we've got the benefit of retrospect. And we've also got the benefit of being poisoned with moral superiority. And as a result, we've become chronological snobs, where we look back on them and just go, these people were knuckleheads. Man, they didn't get anything. Welcome to your world. I wonder sometimes if Jesus looks and goes Gillis, man. Seriously. Anybody home? Do you get anything? I wonder sometimes, right?

We're not unlike the disciples. They didn't get it right away. But when you start reading the book of Acts, you start understanding that they started understanding. They were struggling at first. They were trying to figure

out is this gospel just for the Jews? Is this just going to be for the Jews. And God's saying no no. I've been trying to tell you that all along, right? This is going to be for everybody. This was what Israel was always supposed to do. And now my people, the church, are going to demonstrate this to the whole world. And Acts begins to show that they started getting that. It took them a while, like Peter. It took him a little bit of time. But they started understanding that more and more. It was a beautiful picture.

But I think that this woman actually knew some things, even at this point, even at this level of the story, I think she understood some things that the disciples didn't understand. In other words, she understood that Jesus was meeting her need right now. But that there was more coming for people like her. Or maybe I could say it this way in the context of the story. That for this moment, she was going to eat something from under the table, and it was gonna be enough. But soon, she gets invited to sit at the table. That's the picture.

You see, that's what faith does. That's what her faith, that's why Jesus was so impressed by her faith, because she understood. Maybe I could say it this way, if you want to write down this big idea. Faith in Jesus means we get a seat at the King's table. That's what it means for us. Faith in Jesus means we get a seat at the King's table. Boy, this really encourages me, because what this does, this whole story, it kind of points us forward to what Jesus was going to do on the cross in unifying both Jew and non-Jew, that by faith in Him, that we could all be made new.

You see, here's how Paul said it. After Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension, and now with Paul being transformed by the gospel. Listen to how Paul said it. He said, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth, which is all of us if we're not Jewish, and who are called uncircumcised by those who call themselves the circumcision, which are the Jewish people (which is done in the body by human hands) - remember, all of you Gentiles, that at that time you are separate from Christ, you were excluded from citizenship in Israel and you were foreigners to the covenants of the promise without hope, without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. And his purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away (that's the Gentiles) and peace to those who were near (the Jews). For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, (here's the big summation) you Gentiles are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household.

In other words, you who used to number one, not have a seat at the table, and who were just hoping to get something from under the table, have now been invited to sit at the table, because of what the King has done on your behalf. You see, this is the heartbeat, ladies and gentlemen, ultimately of

the gospel. It's because of what Jesus has done, not because, listen to this, not because we've asserted our rights with God and told him what we deserve. Not because of our pride telling God what we deserve. No, we are like the woman in this story who agreed with Jesus she did not deserve a place at the table. She actually agreed with him. She wasn't offended by the story. She agreed with Jesus. She doesn't deserve a place at the table. She knows she's not Israel. She knows the gods that she's been following are worthless and helpless. But she has determined to put her faith in the one who makes everything new. And now she got a little bit of crumbs, but one day people just like her, just like me, just like you, get an opportunity to sit at the table by faith. This is incredibly humbling for all of us.

You see, this woman did not approach Jesus, as Tim Keller said, I loved what he said, she did not approach Jesus by saying to him, I want you to give me what I deserve based on my goodness. She approached Jesus by saying I want you to give me what I don't deserve based on your goodness. This is what this woman did.

And ladies and gentlemen, in the culture that we live in, this is an incredible lesson for us, because this flies in the face of our offense culture. We do not want to be told that we are sinners. We do not want to be told that we are helpless. We do not want to be told that we are lost. We do not want to be told that we are hopeless because we can figure it all out ourselves. In our pride, what we try and do is impress God. Look at how good I am. Look at all the things that I'm angry about. Look at my moral superiority compared to everyone else, God. I deserve a place at the table. You have missed the lesson of Jesus and the gospel if you think that way.

You can't you can't exhibit your rights to God, you can't be full of pride to God because you and I in our natural condition do not deserve a place at the table. We are lost and undone. We are helpless in our own ways. And it is only because of the grace of Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, who lived a sinless life, who went to a cross and died in your place and in my place, taking our sin upon himself, he being our substitute. He paid a debt that we could never pay in our entire lifetime or in an eternity of lifetimes. Even though he didn't owe a debt for anything. He was the sinless perfect Son of God. He became sin so that in him we could become the righteousness of God. This is the glory of the gospel, ladies and gentlemen. This is a reminder of our gratitude for what Jesus has done. And this is something that we cannot earn. It is a gift of grace.

That's why Paul, when he reflected on this. That's why Paul said this in first Corinthians chapter 1. The message of the cross, it's foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. Does anyone remember what life was like before Jesus? Does anyone remember what it was like to have the mercy of God poured out on your sin filled life and to be transformed by the power of His grace? Because for us that is the power of God. But to a world that is prideful and self-sufficient and who's offended by everything and who wants to show their moral superiority to everything in the world, the cross is foolishness. Do you know why? Why would they ever need Jesus? They've got themselves. This is a rich, rich reminder.

So no matter your background, no matter your baggage, no matter your sin, no matter your need, you have been invited by the King of grace to not

stand outside, to not even live under the table. He's got a seat for you. He has a seat for you at the table by His grace, because of what he's done, not your merit. Not you trying to coax him into something. But because of his grace. And the only way you get there is him, not you. By his invitation. It is by grace through faith that we have been saved. It is not of ourselves. It is the gift of God. It is not of works, unless any of us should boast, the Scripture says. This is the glorious.. this is on me. I don't know. Sometimes, when you preach, it just gets all up over you.

This is the glorious gospel that our culture needs to hear. Because we've had a poisoned soil. In our offense culture where we're driven by pride, and driven by self-sufficiency, instead of driven to our knees learning a lesson that this woman who's not named in the Scripture teaches us. That we agree with Jesus. We don't deserve a place at the table. But that he has so loved us.

Here's the thing. We're more desperate than we ever feared. But we're more loved than we ever knew. Jesus makes a way for us, by what he's done on our behalf. Not what we can do to impress him. So put away, listen, here's what she teaches us. You got to let go of your rights. You got to let go of your pride. And you've got to fall on the mercy of the Lord Jesus. This is what he calls us too.

So if you're here, and you've never come to that place, on behalf of Jesus, he extends an invitation to you to sit at the King's table, because of His grace and through your faith in Him. And so wherever you are, if you've never turned from your sin and put your faith and trust in Jesus, then even right

where you are you can do that. You can receive him right where you are. By simply saying in your heart to him, Lord Jesus I know that I'm a sinner, and I can't save myself. I know that I'm lost and helpless without you. I know that I believe that I don't deserve a place at the table. But I thank you that in your mercy, in your kindness, in your love to people like me, through my faith in you, I can have a seat at the table, now and forever.

The mercy of God is an awesome thing. And even though we weren't God's covenant people Israel, we have, the Scripture says, been grafted in. We're part of the household of God. We get to come in with the children and sit around the table and feed on Jesus. And one day we'll experience the fullness of what that looks like, where he will be our God, and we will be his people. And we will sit at the marriage supper of the Lamb at a place at the table, only because of what Jesus has done.

This is the beautiful truth of the good news, that we can embrace this day. And if you've never done that, then simply where you are you can receive Jesus by faith. It's not about the magic of words, it's about the posture of your heart and faith to receive him. And here's what I would encourage you to do if that's your need. And maybe you're even saying it in the words that you know best how to say it to Jesus. If that's your need, when we dismiss in a few moments. We've got one other thing to do that's awesome. But when we dismiss in a few moments, I want you to come by the Fireside Room. It's just out these doors. And if you're at our other campuses, your campus pastors are gonna tell you where they want you to go in just a moment. And just say I I want to give my life to Jesus. And let them talk to you about what that looks like.

But what I'd like to do now is I would like for us to pause for a moment and celebrate a meal together at the same table. Because when we do that, we're reminded of what he's done for us. So campus pastors, you take it from here. I'm gonna ask our ushers to get themselves in place, and get all the elements for communion. We're gonna do that very quickly before we're dismissed. As you get the elements, you can go ahead and start coming down and getting in place. And I'm gonna ask you once they start distributing these, that you take them and you hold on to them for a moment, because we're all going to take them together. The elements of the Lord's Supper. And while we do that in the distribution of the elements, once we start distributing, and gentleman you can go ahead once you get into place, you can start distributing those as you will. Thank you brother.

While they're doing that, we're gonna sing a couple of choruses of a song you may know. You may not so just join in anyway. Because we're gonna be reminded that the grace of Jesus is bigger than our sin and our baggage and our stuff. And that the reason that we're at the table is because of him. So let's just take a few moments right now and let's sing that together as we're distributing these elements, and you'll wait and we'll take these in together.

As we finish the distribution of the elements, I'll ask you to take out the bread. And I'm gonna pray a prayer for us, but I'm actually going to read it. Because it's a prayer that's been around for some time. It's a prayer from the 1500s, out of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. But it beautifully summarizes what we talked about today and our approach to the Lord's table. Here's what it said. We do not presume to come to this your table

merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ and to drink his blood that we may ever more dwell in him and he and us. Amen.

Let's eat together. If you open the cup as well. The cup is a reminder. It's a reminder that the only way that those of us who were outside of Israel have been led into the table was through the blood of Christ. That's what Paul teaches us. It's a reminder that we have a seat at the table, because of what Jesus has done for us in the shedding of his blood. It's a reminder to us that this picture of us sitting at this table, together with him in his presence is going to be fully realized when he returns. And we see the fullness of his kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. We are reminded and we remember what Jesus has done. That it is all because of him and his worth and his goodness that we have life. Because his blood shed for us forgives our sins and changes our lives when we put our faith in Him. And it's not so much about him making bad people good as it is him bringing dead people to life. We drink to remember.

Now before we leave, two things that I want to ask of you. Number one, and most importantly. If you're someone who needs to understand what it means to receive Jesus, to come into relationship with him. When we dismiss in a moment, please come by the Fireside Room. There's folks waiting on you there. We'd love to talk to you about what it means to have your sins forgiven, your life made new, and to know Jesus Christ

personally. And then as you exit, would you please take the cups with you and deposit them in one of the trash receptacles that are out there somewhere. It would help us out greatly.

So Father, thank you for the beauty of our time together worshipping You. Lord Jesus, we pray that we've made much of you. And that because of that, you are shaping our lives more into your image. May we have the mindset when we look at the world that we live in, may we remember what it was like to be lost. So that we're not so outraged all the time when lost people act lost. May we remember what it's like. And that when we talk to them in this world that is so needy, may we posture ourselves as one beggar telling another beggar where they can find bread. Because we too were not deserving to have a seat at the table. It is because of your grace. So may we be people of grace and people of truth that speak to a world in need with the love and the compassion and the grace and the truth of Jesus Christ. Because we know where we've come from, and we know what you've done for us. May we learn the lessons of this unnamed precious faith-filled woman in the Scripture, who knew what it was to have faith in the Son of God, even though she agreed she didn't deserve a place at the table. Thank you that there are places reserved for people just like that because of your grace. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Love you folks. Have a great weekend. God bless.