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

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**Revelation Review**

**Revelation 1-7**

**Prayer:** *Father, I just again thank you for once again we are at this incredible book that you have given to end your word, and I just again make a plea, make a prayer for the presence of your Holy Spirit in a very special way as we once again undertake this very difficult task. And so I pray for your grace, I pray for your power, I pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit as we review and pray that you would make this of permanent value. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well if you recall, our study of Revelation starts out with a vision that John has. John is on the island of Patmos, he's worshipping and he hears a voice and he turns around and he hears that voice, he sees Jesus saying in Revelation 1, he says: "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

Jesus then gives John a critical review of each of these churches

and he basically lays out the good, the bad, and the ugly and there's one statement that he makes in these first three chapters of Revelation that you see repeated seven different times in all seven of the discussions that he has about these churches. Seven different times in different ways Jesus says, "*I know your works.*" Over and over again Jesus points out how intimately he knows exactly what's going on in the trenches of each of each of his churches. I mean, he knows the geographical settings, he knows the history, he knows the people, almost as if he's been watching over them all this time, which is exactly what he has been doing.

And so we spent quite a few weeks going after the first three chapters of Revelation examining this first vision that John has of the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we see there the church of Ephesus, that's the first one, it's doctrinally sound but it's lost its first love; Smyrna is suffering severe persecution; Pergamum and Thyatira, they've allowed false teachers to slip into their midst; Sardis is dead; Philadelphia is a blessed church; but Laodicea, Jesus says it's vomitus. And yet each one regardless their performance is precious to Christ.

See his church is still in its infancy but already it's seen decades of intense persecution. And the believers, they're weary, they're beaten down. From Nero to Domitian, they've seen the power

of Rome and it dominates almost everything.

I mean, John, the author, he's been exiled to a remote island and he's worshipping and he receives a second vision that's a vast departure from the vision he had in the first three chapters. *Revelation 4:1* says: *After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."*

Well after three chapters describing the struggle of God's kingdom on earth John is invited to this second vision. And this time it's a vision of convergent kingdom, a triumphant kingdom, a kingdom that exists simultaneously with this struggling kingdom that is existing here on earth. It's a kingdom that on rare occasion actually intersects with ours. I mean we've seen hints and bits and pieces of this kingdom in scripture and sometimes we get to experience it ourselves.

This past week I was with Andy a lot, and any of us who were near Andy knew that this was a man who had one foot in this kingdom and one foot in the other kingdom, the real one, the eternal one, the one that never ends. Well, scripture describes occasions when these kingdoms, they appear to intersect just for a moment. Jacob

was once given a vision of a stairway to heaven. He sees these heavenly beings ascending and descending from our kingdom to theirs. Daniel once spoke of seeing a heavenly throne. Paul tells us that in a vision he was once taken up to what he called "third heaven." *2 Corinthians 12* says: *And I know that this man was caught up into paradise -- whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows -- and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.*

So Paul tells us he's taken to a place that's literally indescribable. And now John finds himself, he's in the same place, he's got the same problem. He's trying to describe a worship service taking place in heaven itself. Just picture the dilemma that John has. He's been given a vision of God on his throne, he's trying to translate into words that we humans can understand, a God who -- quote -- *"dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see."*

So we ask the question, how do you describe the indescribable? Well, his best option is to describe it as he does with all of these encounters, by describing it in terms of things that he's familiar with, of symbols that somehow try to capture things that are essentially existing with no frame of reference.

I've raised the question before, how would you explain a rainbow to a person who's born blind? I mean, you'd have to reach out to something familiar to try to kind of bend it to describe something indescribable. That's the way it is with any colors. You might use warmth and coolness to describe the difference between black and white to someone who's blind, maybe you'd describe different emotions to describe some of the other colors of the rainbow but you'd be forced to paint a picture that might seem strange, it might seem absurd and you'd be experiencing the same problem that John had. I mean, he's trying to describe God himself on his throne and he's trying to use symbols, and he uses symbols of jewels and rainbows.

This is what he says in *Revelation 4:2*. He says: *At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.* Now does God actually look like jasper and carnelian? I don't think so. There's a throne, a rainbow that looks like an emerald? Well, that's John's best attempt to describe it.

What he says, he tells us that God's throne is surrounded by other thrones as well. He says: *Around the throne were twenty-four*

*thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.* I found at least six different interpretations of just who these twenty-four individuals are, but tradition and scripture itself seems to identify these individuals seated on the throne, six to a side surrounding God's throne, as the patriarchs. This is the twelve sons of Jacob who makes up the twelve tribes of Israel and along with those twelve are the twelve apostles. And what an incredibly promising signal that sends to each of us.

You got to remember now Jesus has promised that we're going to live, we're going to reign with him. And John is giving us a vision of what that might look like. Perhaps the most important thing to understand here is that the highest honor, the greatest position in all of the heavenly realm was of course occupied by God, but surrounding God and occupying the second highest position in all of creation is us. I mean we're represented by the twenty-four elders who were all at one time human beings, fallen human beings. Every one of these elders who are sitting in God's presence was at one time a sinner saved by grace.

The vision of worship we've been invited to in chapter 4 is literally what John is saying, this is a window that's taking us right into heaven itself. I mean, the privilege that so few in the

Old Testament had a snapshot view is now being written out for all of us to see. For from a worldly perspective the church at that time is a church under siege and they appear to be losing badly. But from a heavenly perspective, God's absolutely still on his throne and events are unfolding exactly as he desires.

Chapter 5 opens with this worship service now taking an ominous turn. This is *Revelation 5:1*. It says: *Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it."*

So why is John, why is he so upset and why is it no one is worthy to read the scroll? And what is that scroll anyway? Well, once again there's all kinds of different interpretations as to what the scroll actually is. Some say the scroll is the title deed to earth itself, others say that it's Ezekiel's book of lamentation, maybe it's Daniel's description of the end times. Perhaps the simplest answer is literally the secret to life itself, it's the unfolding of all things. One author describes the contents of this scroll as

a book of judgment, salvation, and restoration. There's judgment that's coming and that's going through the unleashing of these broken seals, the salvation of both the Jew and the Gentiles and there's restoration, there's a brand new heaven and a brand new earth is presented and all of that is contained in this scroll but there's nobody worthy to read it, even the angels. Peter tells us in 1 Peter there are things in heaven that even angels long to look into but cannot.

And so John is weeping and he's weeping loudly because there's no one, there's not even angels that are found worthy when he's approached by one of the elders who's sitting on one of these thrones. It says: *And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."*

So I want to you picture the scene. Close your eyes and try to get an idea of what John is trying to picture here. He says there's myriads and myriads of angels and there's God himself and he's sitting on this throne, he's surrounded by the twenty-four elders, they're sitting on their thrown and there's jewelry surrounding the throne, there's a sea of glass in front of it, there's lightning and thunder surrounding God and suddenly all the attention shifts to the worthy One, to the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of

David, the conqueror who alone is deemed worthy to open the scrolls.

We've been told over and over again that Jesus was going to come as the Lamb of God the first time but he's going to return the second time as the lion of the tribe of Judah, the name that he referred to here by the elder. And yet John is describing the Lord Jesus at the center of this worship. This is the way John describes it. He says: *Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.*

So we see all this attention is now focused on Jesus the warrior? No. Instead it's focused on Jesus the lamb. You see, most people see the book of Revelation as that time when the gloves are finally going to come off, when that lamb turns into a lion and finally gives this world that absolutely rejected him its due, but that's not at all what John is describing. I mean, everything about his description is the exact opposite of what you might expect.

In fact New Testament scholar Eugene Boring put it this way. He said: "This is perhaps the most mind wrenching rebirth of images in literature. The slot in the system reserved for the lion has been filled by the Lamb of God." Not only is this lion of Judah

described as a lamb but further still a lamb that has been slain. Now there's no mistaking that this worthy one has done what no one else could ever do, I mean, all of heaven is acknowledging him as a conquering hero; there's no doubt he's victorious. But the most astounding thing, the thing that all of the imagery points to is that he's won by losing. He's purchased life itself by dying.

So the victorious one in whom all of heaven is worshiping is receiving this worship not as a lamb lying slaughtered, but as a lamb standing as though it had been slain. And note where it's standing. He said: *Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.*

Well, who do we already know is seated on the throne holding out the scroll, it's none other than God the Father. So how can the lamb standing in the exact spot where the Father is seated? Well Jesus revealed that during his time on earth where he said, he said, *"I and the Father are one."* See, the Father and the Son are at the very core, at their very center, one. Scripture says of Jesus: *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.*

*Revelation 5:6* goes on to say: *The Lamb had seven horns and seven*

*eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And again we have to remember John, he's speaking these things symbolically. If you start thinking of these descriptions literally, you wind up seeing some pretty grotesque creatures, not the least of which is a standing, butchered lamb with seven eyes and seven horns. Not exactly a pretty picture. Well the horns and the eyes and even the lamb itself is to be understood as representing the essence of who Jesus is. You know, the seven horns are symbolic of power and seven we know is the number of perfection, of completion. So we know symbolically the lamb is all powerful. The seven eyes symbolize the Spirit of God which is all knowing and all seeing.*

*So we have this omnipotent and omniscient lamb who now does what no one else in the entire universe can do. Verse 7 says: He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And what follows next is what one author describes as an explosion of worship. It says: And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people*

*and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

You know, Janice just got back from attending a wedding of our niece out in Montana. And while she was out there, she and her siblings, they got a tour of the Grand Tetons and a lot of the magnificent west, and she was trying to describe it to me. Again, she just grew frustrated knowing she couldn't possibly convey to me the grandeur of what she had seen, and this is exactly the problem that we have here but on a far grander scale.

You know, usually we're going to be entering into that time around Christmastime you start to hear Handel's Messiah. Sometimes they play it on Easter but the most of the time we hear it now in the

fall and as the season approaches. It's called the Hallelujah chorus. Also heard of those flashmobs, those group of singers, they come to malls and they spontaneous launch into the Hallelujah chorus.

The funny thing is that it seems to touch that part of everyone that's made for worship. You see people moved to tears, even believers and atheists alike, because we all know that we were made to worship. And we know Handel's Messiah touches that nerve on anyone who hears it. You hear those words from Isaiah sung by choirs and you've seen that displayed, there's hundreds of people singing and they're proclaiming: "For our Lord omnipotent reigneth. He shall reign forever and ever," and other choruses are singing "King of kings, Lord of lords." It's magnificent. We've all seen that.

But I want you to picture the fact that this is just a small group of human beings and I want to you compare that to this worship service that's taking place in heaven, because that piece can't hold a candle to the singing that erupts spontaneously in heaven itself as the Lamb takes the scroll from the Father.

So we see this chorus that begins first with the twenty-four elders and the living creatures. They assemble and they each have a harp

and a golden bowl full of incense. And inside that golden bowl are the prayers that you and I have prayed. It says -- quote -- *"they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people."*

So the next time you start thinking, oh, my praying, it's a waste of time. The next time you start to feel overwhelmed that your prayers seem to have gone nowhere, understand that every prayer you have ever prayed is in that bowl of incense being offered up to God in heaven. And so they sing this new song and they're explaining how Christ's worthiness because -- quote -- *"You were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation."* And that chorus is then joined with a far greater one consisting of the voices of many angels -- quote -- *"numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand."* I want you to understand that represents one hundred and one million angels. I want you to try to picture what that would be like.

So this massive crowd encircles and surrounds the throne, the creatures and the elders, and they're all singing -- quote -- *"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"* And that chorus is then joined by the largest and greatest chorus in the

history of humankind, it consists of -- quote -- *"every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them."*

Finally the elders and the four creatures along with all of the angels and every single creature in existence, they all join in singing: *"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"* The four living creatures said, *"Amen,"* and the elders fell down and worshiped. All of God's creation, they've gathered together to give praise honor and worship to the lamb who conquered and he conquered by being slain. To see the lamb presented as the winner of the battle who was called the Lion of the tribe of Judah and yet when all the attention is put on the conqueror, we see the image of Christ not as a lion but as a lamb -- and not just any lamb but as a lamb slain.

Well the point of the image is that Christ represents the ultimate victory of life itself that was given to us through the death of Jesus. And Jesus shows us a completely different way to achieve victory: Jesus wins by losing. I mean the lamb slain is the all-conquering King who conquers by being humbled even to death on a cross.

So what does that tell us? Well, it tells us that we don't live and respond to this world the way this world expects us to. See, we too are called to win by losing. And that should affect every single thing we do, from our relationships at home, to work, to play, to everything in between. And Peter made that perfectly clear in *1 Peter 2*. This is what he said. He said: *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*

See, the more you trust in him who judges justly, the more you're going to be able to live your life following the example that Christ gave us. And understand, all of heaven is anxious to give honor to that example. At the announcement that the Lamb is the only one worthy to break the seal and open the scroll, all of heaven erupts in worship.

Chapter 6 takes us from that scene of astounding worship and takes us right back down to earth where now the Lamb of God has become the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And it takes us to the horror of the breaking of seals and the opening of the scroll. From there,

folks, things rapidly go from bad to worse.

I mentioned this before, I said entering into this phase of the breaking of the seals I came across this comment in one of the commentaries. It summed up my feeling exactly. It was Darrell Johnson saying: "It is at this point-at 'the breaking of the seven seals'-that most people stop reading Revelation. It is at this point that most preachers stop preaching Revelation-and understandably so. Here the work of interpretation gets much more difficult. What do all the symbols and images mean? And here the work of living the interpretation gets much more difficult, not because the message is so complicated, but because it is so spiritually demanding." (Johnson, Darrell W.. *Discipleship On The Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation* (p. 166). Canadian Church Leaders Network. Kindle Edition.)

I had added, not only does this material get much more difficult but a great deal of the difficulty surrounds the fact that each symbol, each statement, each description is surrounded by a myriad of sincere, gifted and passionate commentators, many of whom disagree wildly about what's taking place. You know, it's one thing to have some nuance in understanding between different commentators, it's another thing entirely to see godly men take completely opposite tacks and then have them back up their

positions with extensive scriptural references and then try to decide, okay, who's who? What's what?

I've recognized my complete and utter inability at this point. I said to Steve many times I was tempted to say, okay, we're done. But God's word deserves far more than just that. So I'm really attempting to give you an array of understandings when that's appropriate and to give you my best understanding when that's appropriate. But understand, I too, I have no certitude trying to come to grips with this incredibly difficult material. And so I plead with you not to take my word as final in any respect but simply as the attempts of another believer to make sense of this.

And so having said that, we have to take a look at what's next and it's where it gets really nasty. This is the four horsemen of the apocalypse. This is *Revelation 6:1*. It says: *Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer. When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword. When he opened*

*the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!" When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.*

Well this chapter, chapter 6 opens with four horses and each are produced by the breaking of a seal. The white horse represents the host of false Christs that is unleashed on the earth and we've certainly seen that happen. It's followed by a red horse which represents the removal of peace from the earth; we've seen that. And this is followed by a black horse representing famine and want, seen that. Followed by a pale horse which represents death itself. That's yet to be. But as each of these horses ride out, progressive seals are broken and each one represents the beginning of God's judgment on earth.

The fifth seal actually represents the martyred saints and they're

crying out to God. They say: *"O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"* And God tells them, *"Rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been."*

Well, the sixth seal represents a massive earthquake and it's an earthquake with calamitous destruction. The sun grows dark, the moon turns red, the atmosphere literally starts to burn. We pointed out by this time the die's already cast; repentance is no longer possible. Mankind has so thoroughly rejected God they're no longer in a position to respond with anything other than fear and loathing except for those whom God seals.

*Revelation 6* says: *Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"* What the world is saying is we prefer suicide to repentance. Chapter 6 ends with the question, *"Who can stand?"*

Chapter 7 answers that question definitively by saying only God's

people, only those whom God has chosen and sealed. Chapter 7 is broken into two major visions. They both have to do with God's action of sealing his own from the judgment that's going to follow, and it's been called "the tribulation," it's been called "the time of Jacobs's trouble," "Daniel's 70th week." It's going to be a time of indescribable horror, and the only ones who are going to escape are those who have been chosen and sealed by God.

And so we say, okay, what's the point of the sealing? It's really to sanctify and set apart God's own from the direct effect of God's own judgment. And again, this doesn't preclude saints losing their lives to persecution. It's simply says that no one who is sealed is going to be subject to God's judgment on the earth. And this in itself is quite significant as we learn how quickly things are going to go from ugly and awful to even worse.

Chapter 7 acts as an interlude, it's this brief pause that we get between the carnage we see in chapter 6 and what's going to be taking place in the remaining chapters in Revelation. And again, just a casual reading through the book makes you wonder how our planet can withstand the horrors that are headed this way. Folks talk all the time about the terrors of global warming and climate change. They have no idea. That's a mosquito bite; that's absolutely nothing. I mean, at this point we've already been

through the seal judgments of the four horsemen but they lead to the trumpet judgments which then lead to the bowl judgments. The trumpet judgments include hail and fire that'll destroy much of the plant life in the world. I mean, so much for environmentalism. That's followed by the death of all aquatic life, another darkening of the sun and the moon, a plague of demonic locusts that torture those who have the mark of the beast, and then a demonic army that kills one-third of all humanity. And that's just the trumpets.

They're followed by the bowl judgments which include painful sores breaking out, more death in the sea and a great increase in the heat of the sun then great darkness followed by more sores followed by the death of all life in the sea and the turning of rivers to blood. That's followed by a monstrous earthquake accompanied by gigantic hailstones.

Every time you think you're getting to the end of the horrors, you find the last judgment opens up a whole series of new judgments. And once again there's a great deal of controversy surrounding the unfolding of these events. There's many commentators who believe that these judgments are actually the same judgments recapitulated over and over again. You know, the seven seal judgment introduces the seven trumpet judgments, the seven trumpet judgments introduce us to the seven bowl judgments. And just maybe, say some of the

commentators, these are the same judgments being spoken of in a different light. And maybe they are. But even so, does that make the future any less horrific?

I mean, we all know we live in a day where God's mercy and patience, it's literally mocked to his face. And God has warned us in *Romans 2*, he says: *Because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*

So just what does God mean by saying our hard hearts are storing up wrath for ourselves? I think we're all going to find out. The vast majority of folks go by the understanding that out of sight means out of mind, and God's almost never in their vision, so he's never in their thoughts. He just doesn't count. The idea of an impending judgment waiting for us, it just doesn't register. But thinking it so doesn't make it so.

And John gives us an eye witness account of what's going to take place in heaven at the end of all of this. At the end of Revelation this is what he says. He says: *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to*

*what they had done. Jesus in Matthew 10 gives us a description of the extent of this examination. He says: "Nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known." "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak."*

You know, the book we're studying right now, it's part of that judgment and it's that part of judgment revealed. I mean if you remember the opening line to the book of Revelation is: *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.* I mean, it's a letter intended to unveil the triumphant return of Christ who has previously been known to the world as a suffering servant. This unveiling is going to no longer be as a suffering servant, it's going to be as the Lion of the tribe of Judah now come to judge.

And we all know there's two different pathways that lead to this judgment. And we also know that one's going to be taken by the vast majority of this world. It's that worn and well-traveled highway that leads to eternal damnation, and this other is this narrow little pathway that leads to eternal life. Jesus said: *"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and*

*those who find it are few."* See the days of meek and mild Jesus as the lamb, those days have come to an end, and the time of Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah has begun.

Next time we're going to finish up our review of the first eleven chapters of Revelation. But our take away this morning, what I want you to take away from this this morning, it just involves the events of this past week. Our beloved Andy left this world this week. You know, he died Wednesday night during our corporate prayer meeting. And myself and the elders, you know, we immediately went over to be with Darcey and to pray. I told Darcey as we're there, I was looking on Andy, and I said, I have a degree of envy because Andy's finished his race, and he'd run that race superbly. I thought what each of us have to be thinking, every one of us are still running our races. Every one of us has the opportunity to stumble and fall. But praise God, we all have the ability to make whatever part we have in this race something that counts for eternity.

I'm struck by the fact that Andy used some of the very last words that he had as an opportunity to share the gospel and invite others to know Christ before it's too late. And you know, each of us, we still have that exact same opportunity. And so I pray that every one of us, I pray that we would get our own opportunities because

we're longing for them, because we're praying for them, because we're asking God for them, because if Andy was showing us anything this week, he was showing us that ultimately nothing else matters. Let's pray.

*Father, we just, we thank you for who you are. We thank you for the immense privilege that we have. Father, we are on that side of life and the world outside that door is embracing death. I thank you, Lord, that Andy even at the very end was able to demonstrate to us and to teach us what really matters, what is truly important. He ran the race and he ran it so well, and we're grateful for that. But Lord, he's left us a legacy that we need to run our race in the same way, with the same determination, to tell that world out there there's an alternative to the death they embrace, there's life itself in Jesus Christ. We pray for that opportunity, we pray for the courage to embrace that opportunity, and we pray that you would guide us and direct us as we do. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*