

Communion

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[0 : 00] This is the item of all humanity of all times. When he who knew no sin was made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Think of that. Just think of that. And it's all on the basis of not what you can do for him, but what he has already done for you.

It is called a grace message, and it is a message that is dispensed, asking for nothing in return, but your acknowledgement of the truth, that you have a need that you cannot meet.

And the reason you cannot meet it is because you fall far short of the standard that God requires. And God's standard is in keeping with his own righteousness and his own perfection.

So God's standard is perfect. And if you are perfect in your decorum, in your belief, in your behavior, in your thinking, if you are perfect, you've got nothing to worry about.

[1 : 14] God will welcome you with open arms because you'll be just like him. You'll be perfect. But if you're not, then you're in big, big trouble. And the reason you are is because God cannot stand, cannot bear anything short of perfection in his presence.

And that excludes all of us because the scriptures have concluded all under sin that the righteousness by faith might be given to those who believe.

But we've got to recognize that that's where we are. We are under this thing called sin. And you know the proof of that. For anybody who might think that they're not a sinner, well, if you're not, then you don't have to fear death because you're never going to die.

Because the wages of sin is death. But if you don't have any sin, you're never going to die. Isn't that nice? Do we have any takers? I suspect not. You'll probably be in an obituary column just like the rest of us.

So what does God require? God requires that you be as he is, which is absolute perfection. Well, now, that sounds downright ridiculous.

[2 : 31] We've already concluded that we're all sinners. We fall far short of perfection. How in the world can God possibly expect something from us in order to accept us, and it's something that we don't have and that we can't give?

What's fair about that? For God to require something from you that you cannot possibly provide to satisfy him, and yet without it, you're lost. Well, what about if God turns right around and gives you as a free gift what he also requires from you so that all you have to do to get it is the same thing you do to get any gift that someone offers you.

You just take it. You just receive it. You don't pay for it. You didn't earn it. You don't deserve it. You just receive it as a gift.

That is what biblical Christianity is all about. It is called the gift of God's grace. Completely unearned and undeserved.

And all you have to do to get that gift is first of all acknowledge that you are in need of it. And there are people who say, I don't need that.

- [3 : 58] I don't need that. And they don't understand how desperately they do need it. And once we come to grips with that, you know, I call this the hard part of the gospel.
- The gospel's got two parts to it. A hard part and an easy part. And the hard part is, you have to come to terms with your own moral failure and inability to measure up.
- You are not good enough and you can never make yourself good enough to be accepted of God. This is where most people are stuck.
- They never get to the easy part of the gospel because they can't get over the hard part. And the hard part is realizing, admitting, acknowledging, you can't make it, you don't have what it takes, and you never will.
- No matter what you do, no matter how many churches you join, no matter how much money you give, no matter how many promises you make, you cannot measure up. You fall far short.
- [5 : 09] You know, that does a job on your ego. It really does. Most people out there walking around and you talk to them about sin, they say, well, I'm not one of those because those are the rapists and the murderers and the drug pushers and I'm better than that.
- I'm not one of those. Well, someone has said, if you've got a responsibility from jumping from New York to England across the Atlantic Ocean and a world-class broad jumper can jump 28 1/2 feet off of the deck and you can only jump 10, it doesn't make any difference.
- You both fall far, far short of what's needed. And that's the hard part of the gospel, coming to terms with your own failure and your own shortcomings.
- And you know, most people already suspect that you're not perfect, especially those that you live with. And we just, we just, God wants us, you see, God is a God who places a tremendous premium on truth.
- And when you come to the truth about yourself, you have dealt with the hard part. The hard part is your failure, your moral incapability of registering or meeting what God requires.
- [6 : 39] And you do business with that. You acknowledge that. You believe that. You understand that. That's called facing the reality of your sin. That's also called acknowledging that you really are just one more member of the human race.
- You're just like all the rest of us. There's no difference. For there is no difference. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. That's the hard part of the gospel. If you've gotten over that, then the easy part is, well, what can I do about it?
- The easy part is, you just put your case, your rest, your trust, your life, your eternity, your future, you put it all in Jesus Christ who did for you what you could not do for yourself.
- When Jesus died on that cross, he balanced the moral scales of the universe. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.
- And then the very next verse, this is 2 Corinthians 5, the very next verse then, Paul says, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.
- [8 : 01] And then he says, and we pray you, in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God. How do you equate those two verses? If he reconciled the whole world to himself, what's that mean?
- That means in the death that Jesus Christ died, he died for every single solitary human being that ever lived or that ever would live.
- Let me put it this way. How many people in humanity did Adam's sin affect? Every last living one of us.
- Every one of us. For as in Adam, all die, not most, all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

That's because Christ reconciled the whole world to himself. And then in the very next verse, Paul says, we pray you then, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

[9 : 09] And what does that mean? That means God has provided the blanket price for the whole of humanity and he has flung wide open the door to heaven and whosoever will may come in and all he wants you to do is admit your need and admit that Jesus Christ paid your penalty in your place.

and that's how you personally appropriate what Christ did for you on that cross. You see, salvation is a personal thing.

It's true. He reconciled the whole world. And what this means is he made the whole world savable. But only those who personalize the message, who accept the truth, can appropriate that and make it their own.

And the question is, have you done that? Do you realize that it is an act of your will?

Do you realize that you don't have to do something religious? You don't have to join anything. You don't have to promise anything. You don't have to give anything.

[10 : 29] All you have to do is believe something. Believe something. Appropriate it. Personalize it. biblical Christianity is the only faith in the whole world.

And you realize there are 1,500 across this globe there are 1,500 religions, sects, groups, splits, splinters, and you name it.

All kinds of every religion imaginable and out of all the 1,500 biblical Christianity is the only faith, the only faith out of all the 1,500 that is the followers are dependent upon what the founder did for us rather than being dependent upon what we can do for the founder.

Think of that. That is unique. Biblical Christianity is unique. But in a world that is so filled with so much contradiction, the truth of the message gets lost.

And we are called upon with the responsibility of proclaiming this truth, of noising it abroad however we can, wherever we can.

[11 : 58] And there is so much error that is out there that it's an uphill struggle. And our Lord told us that it would be. He said, in the world you're going to have tribulation, face it.

And if the world hates you, don't be surprised about that because the world, because they hated me before they hated you. So the world, John tells us in his first epistle, the world is lying in the lap of the evil one.

And they don't have a clue. They don't have a clue. And those who come to faith in Jesus Christ are as brands from the burning, snatched from the fire, and rescued.

And you today, you here, and those who are perhaps listening by way of audio and electronics, you are either one who is in Christ or you are not in Christ.

And if you are in Christ, that means that God views you and sees you not in your own garments of unrighteousness, but he views you as you are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

[13 : 17] You didn't earn it. You don't deserve it. All you can do is thank God for it and accept it as a free gift. that is biblical Christianity doesn't cost you anything.

And for those who think that it is cheap, you need to understand that salvation is not cheap, but it is free.

And it's free because somebody else picked up the tab. somebody else paid your fare and paid it in full and left you with nothing to pay and every reason in the world to give thanks.

So, that's what this communion table is all about. And shortly, we are going to celebrate not only the death of our Lord on our behalf, but his promise that we are to do this until he comes and he's coming.

And sometimes we wonder just how soon that might be. And speaking of crosses, out in the hallway there, there's a list of beautiful wooden crosses with a fixture attached to it so that it's easy to install in your yard.

[14 : 45] And Ed Patton made those in his workshop and they are there for your taking. Feel free to take one. And there's a verse of scripture that says, let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

And put one of those beautiful white crosses in front of your house or in front yard. And it's a way of saying so that you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you're not ashamed of it and you just want to publicize that a little bit and give people something to think about.

It's a beautiful thing. Several of you have already obtained them because they've been made available over the years. I think for the past few years. I know Ron Gannon made several and Ed Patton has made some of these.

So you feel free to just pick up one. They're all free. That's very fitting, isn't it? They're free. So you just take one and employ it wherever you wish there at your home.

It would be a wonderful thing. Next Sunday, we're celebrating our resurrection breakfast and this was kind of an off again on again thing.

[15 : 50] We didn't have it last year due to this COVID thing. We don't know what we might be able to consider normal if it ever does return. We're doing what we call a modified service even now.

and I was just wondering, I'm not sure, it's going to be kind of tricky for the elders to serve communion this morning with everybody scattered out in the social distancing, but they will get the job done and we'll just have to tough it out until this thing is behind us.

But for those of you who are able to join us at nine o'clock one week from the day, Resurrection Sunday, we'll be dispensing with our usual nine o'clock teaching hour in the back, and instead we enjoy a sumptuous breakfast and celebration down at the north end.

And you are welcome to join us. There's no reservations and there is no cost thanks to the people who have provided and will be providing delicious food and we'll just celebrate the morning together and then we'll have the morning service at 10-15 like we usually do and a message regarding resurrection and Easter Sunday.

Also be reminded if you will, the ladies gather for their games and food on April 5 and this coming Tuesday, which will be the last Tuesday of the month, our men's class continues at Studiebaker's at 7 o'clock for those of you who can make it.

[17 : 17] And all men and boys are welcome. We dismiss around 8.30. Prayer meeting at Wednesday evening following at 7 o'clock. We usually have anywhere from 12 to 15 people out for the prayer meeting and this is just a time of real spiritual refreshment, fellowship and enjoyment and you're welcome to join us.

Lois what? While you're talking about the breakfast, I would like to remind people that we need help setting up the table. This has all come so fast. The menu for bringing things is on the board.

Okay. Okay. So find what you want to bring to the breakfast. And I would say at least bring it in 10 or 15 minutes before 9 o'clock so we get it all arranged on the table.

And then I need people to help finish putting up tables for us today so we can put the tablecloths on. And then any of the women or older kids that want to help putting out the plates and the pot holders and all this.

Oh, good. Okay. I'll make it a team effort right after church. And there's a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board if you'd like to be involved with that and like to help. That would be just great.

[18 : 28] And if you are bringing a food dish, try to be here by 845 so as to be able to get everything situated. And there are microwaves and ovens in the kitchen if something needs to be reheated while you have access to that.

And it's a very relaxed, loose poly kind of morning. We just really enjoy the Lord and each other. Yes. Because of COVID and everything going on, on the fruit salad, we used to eat to bring fruit with pizza, but we figured out being close together, would everyone just make their own fruit salad, we'll bring it and throw it all together.

So whatever you put in yours, they'll all be mixed together when you get this. Okay. It's called the hodgepodge salad. That sounds good. Okay. You can do that. And I don't know how this thing's going to work out with the social distancing, but we've already suggested that we dispense with the handshakes and the hugs and everything and being unnecessarily close.

So that'll be in vogue for next Sunday as well. So just use a little bit of common sense and I'm sure we'll have a very enjoyable morning. Also, if you'd like to provide an Easter lily in honor or memory of a loved one, complete the form that is in your bulletin, if you would, just drop it in the offering box.

And I've been advised, for those of you, because this was a real short notice, for those of you who are not prepared to pay \$10 for lily today, and by the way, when the service is over, you take the lily home with you.

[19 : 55] It's yours. But for those who weren't expecting that today, you can pay for your lily next Sunday. That'll be fine. And it doesn't have to be today.

So if you want to do that. But in order to get those in the bulletin for whom you are purchasing the lily and you want to honor, we need that in the offering box before you leave.

So just drop it in the box. That way, they'll be in the bulletin. The names will be in the bulletin then for next Sunday. And we won't have to exclude anyone unnecessarily. So that would be helpful.

Is there something else that you'd like to mention? Yes, Chris. I just wanted to say that the Omnish dinner is no longer tentative. We have 24 people. And I talked to Nancy Helmut yesterday so we're all set.

And if there are still some you would like to sign up, we can take up to 30. Okay. And if you could please, we are collecting free payments this year. So if you would have your money in by next week, you can give it to me or you can put it in the offering box.

[21 : 04] It's in an envelope that says Omnish dinner and then has your name on it. Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much. So we've already met the minimum of a 24. And if there are others who would like to go, and let me tell you, you will never buy a meal like this for 15 bucks anywhere.

I can tell you that. And it's a sumptuous meal and we enjoy the fellowships. Very relaxing, very informal, delightful people that host it and provide the food, and it is outstanding.

So be advised, if you'd like to go along, we'd love to have you. Interesting, almost everybody who's been there before always goes again. That says something good for the food right there, doesn't it?

Are there other announcements that you'd like to make? Anything? Not in the bulletin? Okay. Thank you. In Luke's Gospel, chapter 19, and beginning with verse 11, we read, and we've been talking about this in the nine o'clock hour because we've been dealing with the issues surrounding the subject of prophecy as it involves primarily Israel and the kingdom message.

And this morning we were dealing once again with what we would call faulty assumptions. And as I pointed out before, people are always making faulty assumptions.

[22 : 42] A faulty assumption is something that you believe to be true, but it isn't true at all. and then you act on it. And usually there's very negative consequences because you were acting on what you thought was true but wasn't true.

Turned out to be wrong. We've got an illustration of that in Luke chapter 19 and verse 11. We read, and while they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable because, and that's very significant, he's going to tell this parable for the simple reason that they are nearing Jerusalem and the apostles, these were the people closest to Jesus.

They were already embracing a faulty assumption. They were convinced that a certain thing was going to happen and that was far from the truth.

But you know what? They believed it and I'm sure they believed it in good faith and the text says, because he was near Jerusalem and they supposed, who is the they?

Well, the they are those who are going to be listening to this parable that he's talking about. They are the apostles, those who are going to be traveling with him to Jerusalem.

[24 : 10] They supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. Well, wasn't it? After all, that's what John the Baptist began preaching, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, repent and believe the gospel.

Jesus sent the disciples forth to preach the same message and he preached the same message and they were thinking that Jesus is going to go to Jerusalem and he's going to rout the Romans and kick the Roman army out and set up his kingdom in Jerusalem and it's going to be wonderful and we're going to be right there.

And by the way, James and John had already been vying for some of the choice seating. Grant that my brother and I, one sit on the right hand, one on the left hand, when you come into your kingdom.

They were already putting in their dibs for the office they wanted to fulfill in the kingdom. And Jesus told them that that was inappropriate. Matter of fact, in another text, John and James' mother went to bat for them and they, she came to Jesus and said, when you come into your kingdom, and she too was no doubt thinking, Jesus is going to go to Jerusalem and set up the kingdom.

Would you grant that my two sons could sit one on the right hand and one on the left? Typical mother looking out for her boys, you know, wanting to make sure that they'd have this prime going to happen.

[25 : 37] So he gave the kingdom, he gave this message that has to do with the absence, the absence of the master for a long period of time.

And of course, he was talking about himself and his own absence. John, what? You said we were supposed to stay. You're right. You're right.

Yep. Last week. Last week, you're well, it was only one verse, John.

Well, okay. Touche. For those of you who were not, who were perhaps not here last week, you're wondering, what's this? What's John's standing?

It needs a little explanation. Last week, we were reading a passage of scripture, and it was from the book of Nehemiah, where Ezra was preaching, and it says that he opened the book to read from the book of the law, and all the people stood.

[26 : 55] And then we read in Luke's gospel, chapter 4, shortly after Jesus had been baptized, he went to his hometown, Nazareth, went into the synagogue on the Sabbath, and they came over and handed him a scroll of the book, and it says that Jesus stood to read from the text, and he read, the spirit of the Lord is upon me, he's anointed me, and so on, so on, and I remarked to the congregation at the time, I said, you know, the Jews had this custom, not that we're Jews, and we're not trying to be Jews, but they had the custom of when the word of God was opened and read, everyone stood up.

You know where that comes from? It's just showing respect for the Lord and respect for what is being read, and you know how we carry this over even in today's society?

You've been in a court of law recently, and everybody is sitting there in the courtroom waiting, the lawyers are at their table, and who walks in but the judge, and he's wearing his robe, and if somebody doesn't say it, everybody does it anyway, all rise, and everyone stands.

What's that all about? In fact, he may be a crummy judge, but what you are recognizing and acknowledging is the office that he fulfills.

So out of respect, everyone rises because of what is represented there. So it's a kind of way of showing respect, the same way when you would sing the national anthem, it's an item of respect.

[28 : 45] It doesn't take much, it just takes a little bit effort. Now, sometimes when you get sufficient years on you, it takes more effort than a little bit, but ordinarily it just takes a little bit of effort to show your respect by rising, and John got me.

So we read the word, and John stood, and all the rest of you were seated, and I didn't even think of it, and I'm the guy that instituted it. Go figure.

So you got to love old people. It's a short memory. Okay, well, any other words of wisdom anybody has? Now you all know why John was standing, and he was the only one that was alert.

The rest of you just sat there. You didn't get it at all, and neither did I. So, oh my, well. We are going to be, we are going to be observing the Lord's table, and this is a time of mixed feelings.

I guess we would say it's a very solemn time, because we reflect on what these symbols mean, and they aren't just symbols, they're reminders.

[30 : 08] Why do we need to be reminded? Because we've got very short memories, and you know who demonstrated the shortness of their memory time and time and time and time again?

The whole nation of Israel. When God brought them out of Egypt by a mighty hand, the miracles, the plagues pronounced upon the Egyptians, when he brought water out of the rock and manna from heaven and part of the Red Sea, those were all miraculous manifestations not to be denied, died, and the people were privy to that.

They saw that with their own eyes, and yet, you read on in the book of Exodus, Leviticus, and the people are thinking about, you know, back in Egypt, we had the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions, and life was not all that bad back then.

Wouldn't it be nice to go back? And somebody actually, somebody actually wanted to get up a delegation and appoint a leader to lead them back to the land of Egypt.

Are you kidding me? You were rescued from that. You were slaves there, and you want to go back. What happened? People forgot. Short period of time.

[31 : 38] Yeah, God, yeah, but what have you done for me lately? And our souls loathe this light bread. Gave them manna from heaven, and you know, human nature is such that when the Sabbath came, they wanted to grab more of it and store it away, and the Lord wouldn't allow them to do that, and the bread rotted and was not edible.

They just had one lapse of memory after another. And it was incredible, and it continues on. Different ones are going to be brought against God's own covenant people to chastise them, to take them to the woodshed, if you will, and remind them of who called them and who God really is.

And here they were worshipping these pagan deities and these pagan idols. I remember when, well, I remember reading about it, I don't remember, but when Moses went up to the mount, and he was up there with the Lord getting instructions on the tabernacle, building the tabernacle, and came down from the mountain, and he heard noises of merriment and dancing and carrying on, and he wondered, what's going on?

And he got down there, and here they had this stupid calf, this calf that they had cast out of gold, and people were ready to worship this calf, and the saying was, these calves, these are the gods that brought you out of Egypt, oh, come on, give me a break, how could they possibly stoop to something like that after what they had been through, and after they saw one miraculous deliverance from all kinds of danger, death, and everything else, and they're still ready to lapse into this memory problem, yeah, but what have you done for me lately?

And they got to the place of where they said, and our souls loathe this, I'm getting tired of this stuff. God gave them water out of the rock, and it wasn't just trickle stream, it was like a drinking fountain, it was a gushing stream that could slake the thirst of hundreds of thousands of people in a very short period of time, water out of the rock, beautiful thing.

[34 : 09] all of these were designed to cause the people of Israel to have confidence and trust in this God who could do these things, who looked out for them.

This is the one who said, I will be your God and you will be my people, and I will look out for you, and I will protect you, and I'm going to provide you with my rules, and they're all for your own blessing and benefit.

They are for your safety and security. it wasn't long until they were in violation, and God would have to bail them out each time, and that became the whole principle for the sacrifice of animals, because the people insisted on going astray from God, and they would engage in all kinds of practices that God had already condemned, and that set up the need for the animal sacrifice, and it was going to be a what shall I say, it's going to be a promulgator, an indication that would equip and prepare and enable the people of Israel to understand the principle of sacrifice, and the whole idea was the innocent died for the sins of the guilty, and they would take an innocent animal, animals have no moral qualities to them at all, they're just what we would call dumb animals, they don't sin, they don't have accountability, here's an innocent animal, and this animal is called upon, if you will, to give its life for a guilty human, and we ask you, where is the justice in that?

There isn't any justice in that. Justice says the guilty die for their own sins, that's justice, you get what you deserve, that's justice, but God was setting up a principle of substitution that was designed to acclimate them and condition them to the fact that one day one would come who had no sin of his own.

He was innocent, like John the Baptist said, behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, and this, this sacrifice, this innocent sacrifice, because of who he was, he was not just a man, he was a God-man, God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, and the price that he paid is the price that you ought to pay, but don't have to, because Jesus paid it for you, and he gives it to you as a gift.

[37 : 24] Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. It is unspeakable, and if you are not amazed by grace, it's hard to believe that you can be a recipient of it, because the most pronounced thing that is characteristic of someone who has been saved by God's grace is a profound sense of gratitude and thanksgiving, thanksgiving, all because we know we don't deserve it, and he who did not deserve to die, died for those who did deserve to die.

So, when you think of that cross, if you have put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, when God looks at you, he sees you on that cross with Jesus, dying there with him, just as if you were there on that cross.

That's what that old hymn was written about. That's what it means when it says, were you there when they crucified my Lord? Well, if you are in Christ, you were there, and you were raised with him in newness of life, and Paul tells us, you are seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

And all the while, you thought you were seated here in the auditorium at Grace Bible Church. And you are, from our perspective, but from God's perspective, from he who calls things that are not as though they were, from God's perspective, it's a done deal.

We're already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. That's the way God views you. That's the way God sees it. That's an amazing thing. And the result is just a profound sense of gratitude.

[39 : 35] Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, the good news of Christ, because it, it, is the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.

How could you be ashamed of that? God wants us to own it, to own Christ, to declare it, proclaim it. It's the good news. And isn't it strange how the world fights against the best good news anyone could ever hear.

And they're not open to it. But, in fact, sometimes they even hate those who have embraced it. And what we must not do is hate them in return.

And we need to remind ourselves, before we came to faith in Christ, we were one of them. We were one on the outside. We didn't know him either. But having come to know the Lord, it makes a huge difference in our life.

And it makes all the difference in your destiny. Wow. In your bulletin, there is a song sheet there.

[40 : 56] Maybe we'll just sing a couple of verses. A cappella. And just sing along with me, if you would, please.

And as we sing that first stanza, we'll ask the elders if they will come forth, and we will prepare to serve the communion. Sing along with me, if you would, please. I can hear my Savior calling.

I can hear my Savior calling. I can hear my Savior calling.

Take thy cross and follow, follow me. Where he leads me, I will follow.

Where he leads me, I will follow. Where he leads me, I will follow.

[42 : 06] I'll go with him, with him, all the way. Thank you. Let me see you.

All who are in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is invited to the Lord's table because you belong to the Lord and this is his table for you. This really has nothing to do with being a member of Grace Bible Church, but it has everything to do with being a member of the body of Christ and if you put your faith and trust in Christ, you are welcome to participate with us.

It is a joyous occasion because we know he's coming again and it's one that is fraught with thanksgiving because of what he has done for us. So, if you do not know Christ as your Savior, partaking of these elements won't make any difference.

You cannot become a Christian by taking communion. You become a Christian by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as an act of your will into your own life and heart based upon your own recognized and acknowledged need.

And if that is true of you, then you are welcome to come and partake with us. the night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, he took bread and it was a common loaf of bread from which he broke off a piece.

[43 : 59] And he held up the loaf before his apostles and said, this represents or this is my body which is given for you.

And in the same manner, he took the cup. Our Lord that same night said that this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

So often as you eat of this bread and drink of this cup, you do show forth the Lord's death until he comes. our Father, our thanks are so inadequate and so feeble because none of us really have a great grasp upon that incredible price that was paid in the person of the one who paid it, namely your own dear son.

We cannot contemplate how how deity was incorporated with humanity so that having a body like ours, he was capable of dying.

All we know is the word was made flesh and dwelt among us. John says, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

[45 : 43] our prayer is as a result of being here this Sunday and other Sundays, that our understanding and appreciation of who you are and what you've done for us will abound, increase, and grow so that we may love you more fully and more intelligently and serve you more fervently until we see you.

Christ's wonderful name we pray. Amen. I'm going to ask the elders to wait upon you. We haven't done this for a long time. Ordinarily we do not receive an offering.

We just have the box on the wall back there. People who wish to support the church can do so. But in connection with communion, communion, we take an offering and this is designated as the elders' benevolent offering.

And from time to time, there are folks in our congregation who may have a need, a material need that we are able to meet. Very often, the monies that you give so generously for the elders' benevolent fund is usually spent on people outside of grace because we have a number of folks who appeal to us for help who are not from Grace Bible Church and maybe have never been here.

But we are able to help as we can and thanks to your generosity, this is something that the church is called upon to do and it's a privilege. Freely we have received and freely we give.

[47 : 23] So, be advised that we do not have a tithing system and we have no way of other than what the Internal Revenue Service requires with the envelopes that are back there so that people can deduct what they have on their income tax if they choose to do that.

Otherwise, we have no way of knowing who gives what or who does what and that's the way we want to keep it. So, we appreciate your generosity so much and I'm happy to tell you that in our almost 50 years of existence, we have never had an obligation come due that we did not have the ability to pay on time and that's due to the goodness of God and to the generosity of God's people and we thank you for that so much.