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

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**Communion Sunday The Olivet Discourse**

**Mark 13**

**Prayer:** *Father, we just thank you this morning for, again, the privilege that we have to sit around the table of the King. Lord, this is the day that we remember your sacrifice, this is the day that we remember the gift that you gave us of your Son. And so we pray as again we are going to open up your book, we're going to look into it, we pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit to guide and direct us on that journey and to again make it of permanent value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples to celebrate one last time a Passover supper with them. *Matthew 26* describes it. It says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink*

*again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*

Well, Jesus took bread and then he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood, and he asked the disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup so that they might symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. He then asked them to repeat the remembrance of this sacrifice on a regular basis, and this is what we call "the Lord's table." And we celebrate it once a month and we do that by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross and then by examining ourselves, asking God's Holy Spirit to point out areas where he's convicting us of sin, by confessing our sins, and then by participating in the elements.

*John 6:53 says: So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Well, again we're following the life of Christ, we're following it in the gospel of Mark. Jesus, if you recall, he has just finished observing a poor widow casting her two pennies into the treasury and he's lauding her for her faith, for her generosity. And this is followed by the disciples remarking about how marvelous this temple is, how gigantic the stones are, how beautiful they are

within it. And Jesus responds in *Mark 13:2*. He says: *"Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."*

You see, Jesus had the ability to literally see down through the corridors of time. And what appeared to be massively permanent in the eyes of the disciples was in Jesus' eyes, nothing but a transient blip on the radar. And precisely as he had predicted in A.D. 70, the Emperor Titus attacked the temple and literally destroyed it. The ensuing fire that took place in the temple, it melted all of the gold within the temple and it caused every single stone within it to be taken apart later in pursuit of that gold -- quote -- *"not one stone was found on another."*

Now the disciples, they couldn't even imagine the carnage that was going to take place years in the future and Jesus is then sitting them down, they've got full view of the temple, and this is what he says. This is *Mark 13:3*. It says: *And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?"*

Well the first thing we need to do here is to put ourselves inside

the heads of the disciples. We want to see, we want to understand what they were thinking when they're asking Jesus these questions. I mean, he spoke directly about the temple and they responded by asking him about all of these things that were to be accomplished which means that in spite of the temple being destroyed, they knew that there was a whole lot of other cataclysmic events that were to take place. Again, but they understood them within the context of Jesus becoming an earthly king. Now, in spite of all the different times Jesus had warned, they were still absolutely convinced that Jesus was going to successfully launch a political revolution that would establish Israel as the cornerstone of the world while crowning them as leaders of this new kingdom.

You know, have you ever tried to explain something to someone and you know they just are not getting it? I mean, they question every single thing that you say and you can tell that they're taking it the wrong way or they're completely misunderstanding the details. Well that's what Jesus had to deal with repeatedly. Over and over again he explained that there was to be -- he was to be there as a sacrificial lamb willingly prepared to go to the slaughter.

Back in *Mark 8*, this is what it says. It says: *And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be*

*killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly.*

I mean, not only did the disciples not understand what Jesus was telling them directly and plainly but it goes on to say, *Peter then took him aside and began to rebuke him.* Well, you know, Matthew's gospel goes into even more detail describing exactly what Jesus told the disciples and, again, to absolutely no avail whatsoever.

This is what Matthew's gospel says. Jesus said: *"See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."*

I don't know how it's possible to be more direct, to be more plain, to be more detailed in describing exactly what was going to take place than these words that Jesus shared with the disciples, but you know how the disciples responded? This is the next verse, the very next verse, verse 20. It's describing some of the disciples and their response.

It says: *Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that*

*these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom."*

You know, I don't know why Jesus at that point didn't say, "What part of mocked, flogged, condemned and crucified" don't you understand? But instead he simply told them that the future plans for the kingdom were in the Father's hands instead of his. It says: *He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."*

So just picture, here is Jesus, he knows full well that this is his last week on earth, he knows that his disciples still have absolutely no clue what's going on, and so he addresses their questions with an eye not just to their immediate future but to a future that includes every one of us. It says: *And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray."*

Well, this much we know from Simon bar Kokhba in the second century to Sun Myoung Moon in the 20th century along with a half dozen or so even now in the 21st century, there have been literally hundreds of people through every single century, men and women both, who've claimed to be the Messiah. I mean, you have to understand, when

Jesus made that statement, he was still just the leader of a small band of followers and they had absolutely no political power whatsoever. But for the last 2,000 years just as Jesus said, there's been a slew of people coming in his name.

Well Jesus told the disciples something very important. He told them when he returns, the entire world is going to know it. This is what he said in *Matthew 24*. He said: *"See, I have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the wilderness,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."*

You see, when Jesus arrives for the second time, everyone on earth is going to know it and they're going to know it instantly. So the one thing all of these false Jesuses have in common is the failure to alert the world instantly at the moment of their coming.

Understand that's just what Jesus is promising. One commentator suggested that Jesus' actual return is going to be like an atomic bomb going off on your front lawn for every single inhabitant of planet earth. And so anyone who suggests that he's out in the wilderness or somewhere out in the inner rooms, they're trying to deceive you.

Understand, Jesus has this near impossible task to undertake here. He's trying to explain to the disciples with the same type of pinpoint accuracy the events of the next few decades while tying them to the events of his return which is going to be thousands of years later. Because understand, in their wildest imaginations, the disciples, they could have never imagined the 2,000 years that's already occurred between Jesus ascending into heaven and his return. I mean, they thought it was a matter of moments, of days, weeks, maybe months, not centuries.

As the elders begin distributing the bread, I'd like us to take a moment just consider the presence that we find our self in right now. You see, we actually have a huge advantage that the disciples never had in spite of the fact that they were face-to-face with Jesus.

You know, Jesus has told us ahead of time exactly what's going to take place when he returns. He also told us what to expect before then because things are unfolding exactly as the scriptures said they would. The question we need to ask ourselves this morning is are we taking advantage of the opportunities that these times are giving us?

*1 Corinthians 11 says: But let a man examine himself, and so let*

*him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.*

And again each month I say the same thing, communion is an extremely serious undertaking, to enter into communion in an unworthy manner as to literally court disaster. If you're not absolutely confident that you are a child of the King, if you haven't by faith trusted in Christ as your Savior or if you first need to be reconciled to your brother or sister before you bring the sacrifice of yourself to this altar, then just pass the elements on. If you don't feel right about participating, err on the side of caution and make sure you get right with God first.

And I say this each time as well, on the other hand you can make the mistake of thinking, okay, I'm not spotlessly perfect, I'm not worthy to receive communion; the enemy loves that mistake as well. Because being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin, it doesn't mean that you don't fall or fail, it means that you recognize that the salvation you have received is a gift that no one's capable of earning simply by being good. So we repeat Dane

Ortlund's words. He says: "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do."

It also means that when we do fail, we are aware that we have sinned and the reason why we're aware of our sin is because we have the Spirit of Christ within us. And so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us. This is what God says in *1 John 1:9*: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

So again just to reiterate, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you're spotless, it means that when we sin we understand we have somebody up in heaven right now speaking on our behalf. *1 John 2:1* says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

And that's our key, because we have Jesus' righteousness and not our own, we have this alien righteousness that didn't belong to us, it belonged to him and he gave it to us, because of that we are free now to eat from this table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that he purchased for you. As we

said, he lived the life we were supposed to live, died the death we deserved to die so that we could be made worthy of heaven.

And understand, God's not going to love you any more tomorrow than he does right here, right now, today, because from before the foundations of the earth, God chose to place his love on you. And God saw back then every single sin you would ever commit in the future and still he chose to shower his love on you. And so before we participate, I just want you to ask God to show you how you can use our present day circumstances to reach out to this world.

*1 Corinthians 11:23 says: For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." So take and eat.*

Elders, if you would begin distributing the cup. I want to go back to the conversation that Jesus is having with the disciples. It's called the Olivet discourse because that's exactly where it took place, and it's considered by many to be one of the most difficult passages in all of scripture to understand. And the reason why, there's a whole bunch of different understandings of what Jesus is saying. And one of the reasons why is because his description and

his prophesy is two-fold, I mean, he's describing to the disciples what's going to be happening in the immediate future and at the same time he's using those events to describe events that's going to take place thousands of years later when he returns.

And so this is what He goes on to say in verse 7. He says: *"And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains."*

Again, Jesus is speaking of wars and rumors of wars and we know all about that. We got three going on right now. According to the Council on Foreign Relations there are 26 wars ongoing right now. And that includes the three that we're very aware of: The Russia-Ukraine war, the Israeli-Palestinian war and the rebellion in Yemen. There's other sources that claim that there are 56 wars going on right now if you include skirmishes as well. And obviously rumors of war occupy the evening news, I mean, Hezbollah sends rockets into Israel itself, the Houthi rebels sends missiles towards American warships.

Jesus goes on to say: *"For nation will rise against nation, and*

*kingdom against kingdom.*" And we know the Greek term for "nation" is the word "ethnos", so Jesus is saying ethnic groups are going to rise against other ethnic groups. And whether it's nations or ethnic groups, there's no doubt that's been on the rise, not just in this country but all over Europe, all over the rest of the world. And of course there's earthquakes and famine which is literally again breaking out all over the world.

But there's a very important point that Jesus is making here, and not only the disciples but most of the world seems not to have grasped it. Jesus is making the point that all of these signs are not pointers to the end of time, are not pointers to the second coming. I mean, let me just say that again. Jesus is making it clear that these are not signs of his imminent return. He says they're beginning of birth pains.

Listen to how *Bakers New Testament Commentary* responds. He says: "They mark the beginning, says Jesus. They do not mark the end. Therefore, do not be alarmed. In spite of this clear warning which our Lord gave to his disciples, many present-day church members are filled with admiration for the minister or evangelist who speaks learnedly about 'The Signs of the Times,' and strives to show his audience that this or that terrible battle, serious earthquake, or devastating famine 'on the basis of prophecy' is the infallible

'sign' of Christ's imminent return. It is not."

I mean, these birth pangs, they've been going on for over 2,000 years. And so it is Jesus tells the disciples a prophecy that is actually two-fold. It applies directly to the disciples' immediate circumstances but it also turns out to apply to the imminent return of Christ at the end of time.

And so Jesus goes on to say in verse 9, he says: *"But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them."*

Well this warning clearly seems to be aimed at the disciples' present days situation because we know that's precisely what happened to them, it's precisely what happened in the early church. But then Jesus makes a statement that describes why there's been over 2,000 years since the early prediction became end time predictions. Jesus says in verse 10: *"And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations."* So why hasn't Jesus come yet? It's because that task has not yet been finished.

You know, one of the most wrenched out of context scriptures in the entire Bible is the one that you find in *2 Peter 3:9*: Folks say,

*"not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance."* Understand, this is not a scripture that's describing God's plans for the world, it's not a scripture that describes universal salvation either. You got to understand once again, when you put this verse in context, it becomes quite clear that God is describing the astounding patience he has waiting for the last of his promised sheep to enter the sheepfold. The proof of that is thus far he's waited 2,000 years. This entire verse is about God's patience.

Understand, the verse before that says patience sees a thousand years as a day and a day as a thousand years. And the verse itself says: *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

Well that promise is not universal salvation. Instead it's a promise that God's going to patiently wait till the very last of his sheep enter into the sheepfold, and that's a promise that he made right from the start. In *2 Thessalonians*, he says: *Because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.* And again it points to these two completely different time periods that Jesus is addressing in the Olivet discourse. There's a short term

explanation for the disciples of what's going to take place in the near future along with a long term prophesy of Jesus' return, and we saw that's exactly what took place.

You know, the disciples themselves, they were handed over to the councils, they were beaten in the synagogues, they stood before governors and kings for the sake of Jesus and they did bear witness. But we also know that Jesus was telling his disciples, what he said to them applied not just to their future but to our future as well.

And so we ask, okay, well, how about us? I mean, during the last 2,000 years there's been countless times that believers face the very same fate that the disciples did. And again, Jesus' prophesy has an immediate fulfillment and a long term fulfillment going all the way up to right now today. I mean, it's highly unlikely we in the U.S. are going to be finding ourselves in the same situation as the disciples, but let me tell you, folks in Asia, South America and Africa, they certainly might.

So how do we respond when we find ourselves having to defend our faith or the gospel or simply trying to share the good news with someone who may be less physically threatening but still threatening? I mean, you might be thinking well, I really just

don't have opportunities to share the gospel. But God is giving us all kinds of opportunities that we might never have had in the past. I mean, they don't come wrapped in a pretty silver bow, but let me tell you, those opportunities are there for the taking.

And the best example I can give you is the opening of the summer Olympics. I mean everybody has an opinion and everybody is talking about the slap in the face that that putrid display was to the gospel. And again, I'm sure you've heard the arguments on both sides. Some say, oh, no, it was just a display of a Dionysian bacchanal where drag queens get drunk and act like they're at orgies. I mean that's offered as an explanation, that's offered as an excuse for what this was.

And what France claims to have wanted to show the world, if it wasn't a direct attack on Christianity, it was certainly an attack on decency itself, and it was nonetheless putrid. But guess what? Everybody's got an opinion about it. You know, my opinion was it was simply a display of the inherit hatred that mankind has for his creator displayed now on a worldwide stage. You have to understand, this entire display was designed to promote outrage. In the case of believers it's to promote nothing more than a shrug of the shoulders.

Listen to what God says in *Psalm 2*. He says: *Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."* He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.

See, the King of the universe who gave these folks the very breath they breathe as they're mocking him, he is still sovereign. And so how do we respond? Well, I think scripture gives us very clear marching orders in *1 John 3:13*. It says: *Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.* Okay. Those are the orders. Do not marvel. This is humans doing precisely what humans do, shaking their fist at the very God who gives them life.

So what do we make of this opening ceremony? Well, at the very least, it gives us all kinds of openings to discuss the gospel itself. I'm very thankful that France gave us a picture of what flat-out rebellion towards God actually looks like because I can take that picture to describe the feeling that every single one of us has had that wants to shake its fist at the God created us.

I can go back to the Garden of Eden to describe the implications of Adam's fall, how his one act of rebellion turned the entire race

against its creator and created the chasm that only God could fill. And that the very Jesus who inadvertently or obviously was being mocked with that display, was God himself who came to earth to pay the price of our rebellion, to live a perfect life and offer that life up on a cross so that we could have our record wiped clean and stand before God now worthy of his heaven. In that sense France did us a great service.

So now when we get involved in these discussions, well, can we rely on the same miraculous intervention of God that Jesus promised to his disciples? Well, I think the answer to that is, well, that depends. Listen to what Jesus told his disciples about their present day situation in verse 11. He says: *"And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit."*

Well, I think you can see how this text applied perfectly to the immediate future of the disciples. Peter's perhaps the best example of what it means to just trust that God's going to give you the words to speak at the precise moment you need to speak them, and it's easy to forget when you read Peter's epistles or John's for that matter that these men, they were uneducated tradesmen. They went fishing for a living. And yet when they were called

before government authorities or church authorities, they found themselves waxing eloquent not because of any skill that they had but because of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

You know, the book of Acts describes an incident in which Peter heals a crippled beggar who had been stuck in one spot for years and that miracle draws this huge crowd and so Peter turns to the crowd and begins to address them.

This is what he says: *"Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.*

*"Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out,*

*that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."*

I mean, you read these words and you forget, these are coming from an ignorant -- quote, unquote -- "fisherman." This is a guy who had no training, no education when it comes to things theological and so it's astounding how eloquent Peter sounds knowing what his background was. And that's just what Jesus promised. In fact others knew his background. The fact wasn't lost on the religious leaders and the authorities as well. *Acts 4:13*, it says: *When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.* So Peter clearly gives evidence that God miraculously had given him the very words that he needed as he needed them.

So the question that we want to bring to here, right here and right now is can we expect the same kind of miraculous intervention? If we get into difficult discussions, can we expect a miraculous transfer of wisdom and information from the Holy Spirit to us as we're speaking? Well, I would say wisdom, yes; information, I don't think so. You see, it seems to be a very narrow set of circumstances that God is describing here. What he's saying is if you get arrested and you're brought before a council or a court or a governor and you're called on to defend the faith publicly, I

think you can certainly trust that God is going to give you the words for that moment.

But you know, ever since the church began it's been involved in the task of sharing the gospel for better and for worse. And scripture takes great pains to point out that sometimes sharing the gospel is a gloriously simple task, and other times it's ingloriously complicated. Sometimes the gospel makes you smell the sweet fragrance of life itself and sometimes sharing that gospel stinks of death itself. And those aren't my words, those are the apostle Paul's. In *2 Corinthians 2:15* he says: *For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?*

And again, that last statement sums up exactly how we should view every single opportunity we have to share the gospel -- quote -- *"who is sufficient for these things?"* Nobody. I mean, we may stumble, we may stutter, we may fall, we might make complete fools of ourselves, but understand, we may be mocked but God is never mocked. There's no time whatsoever when you honestly share from the word of God that God is not honored in some way and glorified in another.

You know, the dear brothers who taught me as a brand new believer insists that every time you quote the Bible you move people toward becoming believers. They would quote Isaiah's words in that effect. *Isaiah 55* says: *So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.* Well, what they weren't taking into account with that last statement was these words: *"It shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."* Well, you know, sometimes that's the glory of salvation but sometimes it's the glory of judgment, because God wastes nothing.

And sometimes when your gospel wreaks of the stench of death and people respond accordingly, you're going to think this is not worth it, this is not worth taking that kind of a risk. But God is saying literally that every time you honestly share the truth of the gospel, you bring glory and honor to God regardless of how your testimony is received. I mean, the disciples learned very quickly what that savor of sweet life or the stench of death felt like, and we, too, should be willing to experience both, knowing in the end the God that we are after is a God whose glory matters the most.

And furthermore, Christ's warning to his disciples once again contains advice for our present day and clearly an understanding of

what's going to be taking place just prior to his return during the tribulation when those birth pangs begin in earnest. This is what he says in verse 12. He says: *"And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."*

So again, to take Jesus' words, to put it mildly, things are going to get much, much worse than they've ever been; and again, I'm speaking in a very parochial sense. I mean, to many in parts of the world where Christianity is persecuted, those words already describe their present day experience. I mean, here in the United States we haven't experienced anything like our brothers and sisters throughout the world have experienced. I mean, there's no doubt there are some right here, right now today who have had their own brothers deliver them over to death, there are some who have had their own children betray them.

And one thing we can certainly know and understand, thanks to incidents like the opening of the Olympics, is that the gospel and the God that it represents is clearly hated by this world. And what does God tell us directly about that? He says don't marvel. *"Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you."* So as you

take the cup, ask God for the grace and the courage to, just like the disciples, use whatever present day circumstances we have to share the most important truth there is, and that is the gospel.

*1 Corinthians 11 says: In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. So take and drink.*

One final note. This is our head, hands and feet where we try to have some kind of practical understanding of what it means to remember Jesus.

And I want to go back to our present day circumstances, our present day situation. One of the most popular new terms to enter into the lexicon of our present day understanding is the word "gaslighting." I mean "gaslighting" means lying on such a wholesale level that the person receiving the lies either begins to believe it or starts thinking that they're crazy.

We're in full swing now with the political season, so we're going to be hearing both sides complaining about the gaslighting that's taking place. Well, I just want to say that the gaslighting about this Olympic event was literally off the charts. When the whole

world reacted, the authority simply lied that it was merely the celebration of a pagan feast. Trust me, it was not. You know, those drag queens, they were posed in exactly the same positions that the apostles were in DaVinci's painting. And in one press conference an Olympic official even slipped, he told the press this was a reinterpretation of DaVinci's painting of the Last Supper, and the point is it was designed to attack the very thing we're celebrating this morning.

And so our marching orders with regard to this display is, as I said, not to marvel, not to get upset, depressed or fearful, but on the other hand God says, don't be naive. We spent the last hour looking at Jesus' predictions of the way things are going to be and we see those predictions unfolding before our very eyes. Part of the practical solution to remembering Jesus lies in preparing our self for how the enemy is going to respond as we come down to what might be the end.

I mean, we know we're in the birth pangs and God alone knows when the actual birth is going to take place, but until then it's our task to stay one step ahead of the gaslighters, and scripture is how we do that.

Listen to what *2 Thessalonians* says. It says: *The coming of the*

lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders. And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. For this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they may all be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Understand, forewarned is forearmed. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you that what took place at the opening of the Olympics was literally a gift from France to us. It gave us and gives us the opportunity to share our opinion with all of the opinions that are flying around. And so I pray, I pray for each and every person in this room, I pray if they hear that opportunity that they might just perk up their ears and send up a prayer to you, to the Holy Spirit to give them the opportunity to share just what the gospel means, just what the source of that mockery actually is. Give us opportunity, we pray, to turn what is obviously a sleight on the gospel into something that gives us the opportunity to preach it and preach it well. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.