

Learning the art of Gracious Integrity

May 19, 2019

Pastor Judy Howard Peterson

artisanchurch.com

[Music Intro]

[Male voice] The following is a presentation of Artisan Church in Rochester, New York.

[Voice of Pastor Judy]

Over the past couple weeks we've been talking a bit about the better news, and both receiving the better news (what is the better news for us?) and then becoming the better news for the whole of the world. And I began with a verse that's usually read at Christmastime but I encouraged you, is really the gospel in Tweet form. This is Luke 2:10 -11 and it begins with, "Do not be afraid," which is so important, and then it says, "Do not be afraid for I bring you good news that's of great joy and it's for all people. Today in the town of David," in a real place, "a savior," a real rescuer, "has been born to you and he is the Messiah, the Lord." This, I believe, is at the core of the entirety of the better news that we have to offer you as the people of God. That we have a real and rescuing God. Not a theory, not a whim, not a word, but a real and rescuing God who shows up in the middle of real life in a way that's good news of great joy for everyone. During my four weeks with you this is my primary and most foundational encouragement. If you learn nothing else, I just want to encourage you to trade in your 2-dimensional doctrinal religion for a real relationship with a 3-dimensional God that shows up to us and through us in 3-dimensional ways. To learn to follow in the footsteps of this God who put on skin to come and really love people, not as an idea or a theory, but in real ways. Because I believe if we all begin to show up in real, 3-dimensional way in the middle of real, 3-dimensional lives, as good news of great joy for all people, it will be better news.

For those of you who weren't here last week I invited you to be passionately devoted to this concept, to not just think about it in theory but to be passionately devoted to the good news of great joy of Jesus. And I offered a bit of a challenge that as followers of Jesus we're not to be passionately devoted in the same way the world is passionately devoted. Because most people who are passionately devoted to something end up fighting for their team. As followers of Jesus we're not supposed to be dying for a fight. Instead we're supposed to be laying down our lives for love. To stay true to this sort of passion I offer that it's helpful to remember that passion can be an emotion like, "Oh I'm so passionate about that burrito!" [laughter]. You know, it can be like that emotion, but the word passion is also the word used for Jesus laying down his life.

2019-05-19 *Learning the art of Gracious Integrity*

When we're going to be passionately devoted, we are not going to be that passionate for the burrito type of people. We're going to be passionate in the life-laying-down sort of way. This is at the heart of the better news and we follow a Savior who laid down his real life because of his real love for the real whole world, and we're invited to follow Christ. And not just to die for Christ (I'm so tired of that) but to die *like* Christ, which is what we're supposed to do. And contrary to the news cycle that most of us are watching streamed through our screens at every moment, the better news we have to offer is not about fighting *over* somebody or *overpowering* but a God who brings good news of great joy through a vulnerable infant. I don't know if you remember I said the first time Jesus comes he does not come on a white horse with an army. He comes as an infant and you go, "Awww." When Jesus comes the first time into people's lives there's a vulnerable little life inviting you to pick it up and draw it close to your chest. This is how Jesus comes in a vulnerable way, or as Father Richard Rohr says, "God's power comes through powerlessness and humility. The Christian God is much more properly called the all vulnerable than the Almighty." And this is better news because once you experience God is all vulnerable then you can understand that God willingly stands in solidarity with all that have pain and suffering in the universe. God comes as all vulnerable. God's power comes through powerlessness and comes through humility.

And this is about as counter-cultural as it gets because in the western world these days, and then we outsource it to the rest of the world, we have become so progress oriented that we think we should move forward and only forward, always upward and on to the next rung of things. This is how and where we're told success is achieved. And all too often the church has just followed the world and we preach something like, "Oh God wants us all to be successful! Just give me your \$9.95 and life is going to be up and up in no time at all!" Let me let you in on a little secret: We're not all going to be successful. And I know that that's what I was pitched for my entire childhood: I might change the world to be awesome, "You're going to be great!" It's just not the truth. Life doesn't go up and up. There's a whole lot of down. And if I know that the God that's all vulnerable can be with me in that place then God could be with me in any place. But it is not the better news for the whole world if God only loves success, because then when we are unsuccessful we think we're unloved. That it's better news for the whole world that there is a God who emptied himself, that knelt down to stand in solidarity with all those of us who actually are not feeling that successful at all. Which leads me to my encouragement for this morning. I believe that power *with* is way better news than power *over*. Coming to stand in solidarity *with*, in a unique way.

A little addition to the past couple weeks is I would like to invite us to think about this power with rather than power over in a particular way. I want us to become passionately devoted to a 3-dimensional God by becoming relentlessly humble and relentlessly seeking to stand low

2019-05-19 *Learning the art of Gracious Integrity*

rather than to get high. Let me pray and I'm gonna move us forward. Lord God, I thank you that you are a God who comes and you put on skin to love us. That you came as a vulnerable infant. That you didn't come while riding on a white horse, but you invited us to pick you up and draw you close to our heart. God, I thank you that you came as vulnerable which means you can know us in our vulnerabilities. God, I thank you that you continue to come, not as power over but power with. God, I pray that you would teach us what that looks like for us to be little and for you to be a big. God, I know today that not all words are for everybody but some are for everybody. So I pray that you would sort that all out, that the right words would go to the right people and bear fruit 30, 60 and 100 times more than I could ever ask or imagine through the foolishness of preaching. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Now when I say relentless, think about what comes to mind. You might think of like a 2-year-old like, "Mom, mom, mom, mom, mom, mom!" Right? This is like, relentless. And many of you have had people around you that are a little bit relentless. Relentless kind of means it never stops, never gives up, never fails. It isn't easily exhausted ("Mom, mom, mom!"). It powers through weariness and it's consistent. Continuous. Faithful. Repetitive. It keeps going until it gets what it wants. Relentless. For me, relentless conjures up an image from childhood. You can put that slide up [refers to PowerPoint slide]: This is an image of Lake Superior up on the Iron Range. Unlike the shoreline I was walking yesterday on Lake Ontario, we have huge cliffs and the waves are huge and they come pounding against the shoreline over and over again. They are constantly crashing into the rocks. They are a relentless force and over time those relentless waves, that unstoppable force, eventually makes all the rough edges of those rocks smooth. [Refers to next slide]: Around Lake Superior we do not have sand. What we have is all these little round the stone beaches around there, and this is where all the rough edges — because of the relentless action of the waves — have been worn away. A relentless a force that can make even the roughest edges of our lives or of this world smooth by a particular action. And the repetitive action that I believe is essential if we're going to wear down the rough edges of this life is humility. I don't think we do this by force. I think we do this by becoming humble.

Now when I asked a group of people to define humility, this was a bit difficult for them to put words to unlike relentless, which they had an image for. So they said things like, "Well, it means like a lack of ego." Maybe. That "humility is a proper understanding of yourself and others." They said it means you have no delusion or deception about your value comparative to somebody else's, it's a sense of equality. "A right perspective on things." Someone said "a lack of self," (and) I'm going to come back to that at the very end. And one that I particularly appreciated because I have said this so often is that, "humility is that we recognize that we are little and God is big." That God is God and that we are not, and that gives us a sense of humility. It was a little more difficult for people to define humility as a thing, and it's really no wonder

2019-05-19 *Learning the art of Gracious Integrity*

because the usage of the word humility has really dropped over time. [Refers to next slide]: But about 200 years ago it was really used a lot. People really talked about being humble. But by the time most of us were born the word was barely even used. No one said to their kids, “You’re going to grow up and be so humble!” [laughter]. This is not what we plastered on t-shirts. It’s not what we call today, “You’re going to be so great again!” What’s it look like to make America humble again? To wear down some of these sharp edges and these things that maybe if we relentlessly committed, something else might happen. Because the reason we don’t do this is because the word humility comes from the word *humus* which simply means the ground or the dirt. *Humus* is something close to the ground; it means to get low. The truth is (no pun intended) but since long before I was born, people were wanting to get high [laughter]. The whole world wants to climb the ladder, work one’s way up, get promoted, be at the top of the food chain, divide and conquer, get to the top. Get low? Who wants to be demoted in a world that’s entirely geared toward self promotion? How is that even better news?

Now perhaps if I frame it in its opposite you can begin to see why humility is news that’s better for all of us because pride is the opposite of humility. People who are prideful, truthfully, are very rarely good news to me. Joan Chittister, she’s a Benedictine sister, describes pride this way in her book *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily*. “It’s a desire to be my own god. To submit to no one and to control other people and things.” She says, “In contrast, humility is first understanding we’re not God,” which is actually better news for everybody, “but we can become people with no high places, no airs of importance, no looking down one’s nose. Humility is the ability to deal both with their own limitations and the limitations of others.” This is what we just heard through our scripture passage that was just read by Susan. In John 13:1-17 we find a God who decided he wanted to get low. He wanted to take a *humus* position. He wanted to self demote to bring the better news. A God who joined people around a very low table, who did not take a high place at the other end of the table, and who did not look down his nose even at those who were about to betray him.

And I’ll set the scene a little further. The disciples have come into Jerusalem for what is known as the Passover festival. This is *the* place to be. Anybody who’s anybody is in Jerusalem for Passover. This is where you jockey for position — you have the best Passover feast, you have the greatest place to meet, and they’ve brought in all their animals for sacrifice. Now the Passover was a celebration where they remembered a time when God had brought good news of great joy for the Jewish people. They had been slaves for hundreds of years and in order to convince their primary slave holder, the Pharaoh, to let them go, God had sent some plagues to show his power. And the final plague was the death of the firstborn, but God offered a way out of death for those who were listening to him. He said, if you slaughter the vulnerable lamb that’s without defect and you put the blood of that lamb on your door post, then death will

pass over. This is a Passover lamb and this is what we celebrate at this table. It's not a Yom Kippur lamb (that's for the forgiveness of sins). We're celebrating a Passover lamb. That means it's the from deliverance of death, and that's very important for us. Jesus invites his closest people to come around for this Passover feast to remember the God who delivered people from slavery and death. And everyone is in town to celebrate this. And lambs are going to be slaughtered, and so there's going to be a mess in the streets and everyone is kicking up dirt because it's not paved and everyone is walking on what all the lambs leave behind and everyone is wearing open toed shoes. And Jesus is inviting his most intimate traveling companions, his disciples, to join him for a feast — a meal that's going to become known as The Last Supper because it's the last time he he is going to eat this meal with these disciples before he's crucified. And here Jesus says, "Now in this place I want to show you how much I love you. I want to do it in this way, it says, I'm going to love them to the end. I'm going to love them to the fullest extent," some translations say. "I'm going to love them in the most perfect way," and the most perfect way to be loved is actually quite startling. The meal is already in progress when Jesus reveals this new way, this perfect way of showing love. He gets up from the meal, he takes off his outer clothing, he wraps a towel around his waist, he pours water in a basin and he begins to wash the disciples feet. And he dries them with a towel that's wrapped around him. The most perfect way of loving, the way you love people to the end, the way you will love them to the full, is to kneel in front of them. To get low and to begin to participate in an activity that is usually reserved for people who are beneath you. Jesus demoted himself from *Rabbi*, the person who had the highest status in the room, to the position of servant. And then not just any old servant. This isn't the servant bringing the food. This is the servant washing those feet that have been walking through this particular dirty place with open toed sandals. One of Jesus' disciples Peter protests. He said, "You will never wash my feet," to which Jesus responds, "But unless I wash you, you can't have any part of me."

Now I can preach this text in two legitimate ways and probably more, but at least two, and I think in regard to humility it's good for you to know both of these sort of trajectories of the text. And I want you to think for just a minute and pause before I do that, that there are at least two legitimate ways to preach this text. There are always lots of ways to preach the text, okay? That's one of the ways we come in humble because we say, oh, you might be right, too. Right? And so I want to sit in that minute. And I can preach this passage faithfully by framing Peter's fear of Jesus washing his feet as a fear of being exposed to someone he wants to impress. This fits well with what we know about Peter. He was called to follow Jesus as a sinner and he's been trying to disprove that every moment since to say, like, "No, really I'm actually pretty good." So Peter has been trying to be "the guy" ever since he got called as a sinner, and so it fits well that Peter wouldn't want the one he wants to impress to see the part of this life that's

2019-05-19 *Learning the art of Gracious Integrity*

unimpressive. This fear of exposure is true for most of us. It is so humbling to put our real selves out there, which is why Kim's words at the beginning are so important. Man, I came into this place and felt like I could be my full me. If you figure out how to do that as a community you are going to be the better news to most of us, because most of us only show up with our impressive selves. We don't want to expose anything that we think would be unimpressive, and this is true in the most practical sort of ways. I know the Scripture says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news," but it's a total lie [laughter]. Like, I bring good news but I have, like, ugly feet. Now they might look pretty good right there with sandals on, and you can't really see that my manicure is not right and that I have two toenails that are falling off. But you can't see that from there — they look impressive. But I have always been really awkward about my feet. I was born with really bad feet and I had surgery on both my feet when I was 16. And so everybody else had cute little feet and I had crooked toes that had to be straightened and all this sort of stuff. And so I don't want people touching my feet. I also have Flintstone feet; they're really flat. And so they're not like cute dancer feet, they're flat Flintstone feet. And then I have a wart on my right toe and I used to have ingrown toenails. I mean, they're *not pretty* and before I walked across America they weren't good. And after I finished that they grew a size and a half. I mean, going to get a pedicure is torture, and I've only done it twice in my entire life. And one time I did it with my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law who just insisted that I join them for a pedicure. And I'm like insecure all day, you know. I'm giving myself a pedicure before the pedicure — have you ever done that [laughter]? I mean you're like, "I'm going, please let my feet be okay!" And this is what so much of our life is like: "Let me clean myself up first before I come to the place where I could be cleaned up. And I went to that place and I sat down and I told her I was super insecure about my feet and my mother-in-law was on one side and my sister-in-law on the other side. And their pedicure people were like, "Oh, you're feet," touching their feet, loving their feet. My pedicure person was holding my feet by my big toe! [laughter] reinforcing everything I already feel about myself; this part of my life is not worthy of tender touch. I should despise it. This is how a lot of us feel when we come in and we expose our most vulnerable part. Even then it's pretty risky because someone could hold us by that big toe. Everybody else seems to be being loved, but our unimpressive parts we want to hide.

It's humbling to have the places we're insecure about exposed especially if we think we're going to be humiliated in the exposure. And humiliated has the same root word as humility, and they are entirely different things. Having humility is not about being humiliated. Jesus is engaging with our dirt and it's not about humiliation. Jesus engaging our dirt is about exposing us, allowing us ourselves to be humble enough to expose ourselves so we can be loved. Not so we can be made to yield to a low place but so we can give way to being humble. Unless we are relentlessly humble with our lives and continue to let Jesus have access to our entire lives, not

2019-05-19 *Learning the art of Gracious Integrity*

just the impressive part, but even the parts that walk in the dirt of the world and are covered in the crap of our own sin. If we can't let this stuff be exposed to Jesus and cleansed by Jesus we will never have part with him. We will never be in true communion with anybody we have to lie to. Humbly placing our real lives into the hands of a real savior, this is where communion is had. And this is a legitimate way to preach this passage, that Jesus is saying unless you humbly place your whole life into my hands and trust me you can have no part with me. That's a legitimate way to preach that. Foot washing is an invitation to humbly expose the dirty-from-walking-through-life self to Jesus so he can show us in a 3-dimensional way that he did not come to overpower us but to use his power *with* us as he humbly kneels before us to show the full extent of God's love. Foot washing is not an act of humiliation, it's an act of humble trust in a perfect love that casts out all fear that if we were known we would be unloved. Preaching it this way requires you to be humble to receive the grace of God in a 3-dimensional way. We generally only risk this if we if we actually know. If you don't know Jesus and you only have some idea of God, perhaps you won't allow your whole life to be in God's hands. But I think if you know the Savior who kneels in front of us and washes us clean and doesn't hold our toe then perhaps you could risk being your false self and receive the full grace. There is however, another legitimate way to preach this passage. And this is a challenge that comes to each of us that also requires us to be humble, but not so that we can receive the grace of God but so that we can offer the grace of God into the world so that others could experience the full extent of God's love. It says in verse 12, "When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. 'You call me teacher and Lord, and rightly so for that is what I am. Now that I your Lord and teacher have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than the master nor a messenger greater than the one who sent them. Now that you know these things you will be blessed if you do them.'"

Jesus willingly kneels in front of his disciples and takes the lowest position so other people could know they're loved. A love that doesn't overpower people, but instead serves them when it means even the loss of their own power or position. Jesus chooses people over his own status and then he says, now go and do this thing. Choose people over your own power and status. Give way to this sort of action. Now the reason I want to present this second interpretation is I think it's really easy to spiritualize this passage. And what I mean by that is that we can make it all about the gift of Jesus cleansing us from our sin, which is totally true. All the dirt, all the stuff, all the fear of exposure — Jesus has got that. But how can I go and do likewise? Really, I can't offer ultimate cleansing to anybody from their sin. I've never, like, given anybody eternal life. How can that be what I'm doing? I can't do that likewise. I don't want to spiritualize this

2019-05-19 *Learning the art of Gracious Integrity*

and absolve ourselves or give ourselves a pass from the actual commission or the challenge, Go and do likewise. Give up your power so that someone else might know they're loved to the full extent. This passage is not just a call to spiritual vulnerability and spiritual humility in that way. This is a passage that is a radical call to leave behind self promotion and to follow Jesus in self demotion when you don't have to. Someone else would've washed those feet, but it is electing to do that to show the full extent of God's love. A life of serving others rather than having ourselves be served. This interpretation takes this passage into the real, out of this sort of spiritual idea and places it into the earthy *humus-y* realities of life. This is not about you just being loved to the full extent, this is about you loving the world to the full extent. And that you would do it at the expense of your own power or position. And I think when this is the call, we like Peter often say, Oh no, you're never going to wash my feet. To which Jesus responds, Unless I wash you, you have no part of me. Because if we preach the passage in the second way, if we take Jesus' actions at face value and we know we've been called to actually follow Jesus and not just have an idea about Jesus, we will actually have to take the lowest position. We will have to humble ourselves in service to others and then deal with other people's dirt. Jesus got up and started to remove his outer garment and take the towel and started to kneel and I think Peter was like, Don't do it. Don't do it, don't do it. You cannot be serious. Stand up. I do not want to be following that. I thought we were going to do something dignified together. Don't wash my feet! Perhaps this is why Peter says, "Wash my hands and head, too." Because that would be like a normal priestly function. Let's have our thing be a more holy ritual. You know, where you stand up and bless my head? Let's make that our thing, a nice normal religious practice [laughter]. I mean, I truly think this is why we've kept *this* but we don't do *this*. Can't we just have a nice normal sort of thing? I mean, I don't know if this is normal either. But can't we have something that feels dignified and holy? Because it says do both of these things. We've only kept the dignified one. Wash my head and my hands. Please don't wash my feet and ask me to follow you because that's going to be a mess. And Jesus says, Peter if you don't let me do this and then if you don't follow me in this you, really aren't part of me. If you're not willing to serve rather than be served, you can't really be my disciple. This is the movement I'm starting, one where we give up our status.

Where we empty ourselves or we take on the role of a servant so the world could know a God who does not power *over* but instead loves fully and perfectly by getting low. If you don't want to do this, it's okay, but you can't really have part of me because this is me. I am the God who empties himself and unless you commit to this pattern, you're not really part of what I'm doing. Because if you want to follow me you're accepting not just my gift of grace but also my commission to let go of power. To put other people's interests in front of your own so that other people could get a glimpse of God, not just more of a glimpse of us. You see, this is the

2019-05-19 *Learning the art of Gracious Integrity*

earthy *humus*-y passage that we like to make all spiritual. This is an invitation to enter into the real dirt and the real crap of people's lives. In seminary, one of the odd jobs I took to pay for school (I put myself through seminary) and I waited tables during the day, but I needed some extra money. And one of the odd jobs I took was cleaning the art building on the campus where my seminary was. So it was an undergraduate art building and every night I could work from 10 till 12 anytime in that four-hour span. So after I'd done my my waitressing shift I could go there and put in a couple more hours and finish that. This was a very humbling experience for me, I have a whole new appreciation for the absolute humble work that physical plant and janitors do across the world. It is incredibly humbling where people would use the restroom and miss the toilet entirely and leave it. People would aim for the trash and miss, and they would walk away. People would start a project, forget about it, and then just exit and expect someone else to clean up the mess. They just seemed to believe that whatever mess they created, it was not their problem to clean up — that was beneath them. The first few times I went into Wilson Hall to clean, I walked around with my mouth open and words flowing out that had nothing gracious to say. Now the grace of God is that if you keep walking with God He will relentlessly wear down those rough edges. And by the grace of God, just a few days into cleaning Wilson Hall I came across our passage from today: “No servant is greater than his master nor a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things you will be blessed if you do them.” And I began to take another look at the possibility of this work that was inviting me to get low. Perhaps it could make me a real Jesus follower rather than one that just fronted that sort of life. That next evening I walked into the building determined I was going to follow Jesus. Thankfully somebody left their crap in the toilet [laughter]. So I could wash it clean. And I could pray for them. I could pray for them to know that Jesus wasn't also freaked out about their crap or whatever part of their life was missing the mark. Thankfully, people missed the trash can they were aiming for so I could pick up their trash and I could pray for all the garbage in their life. I could haul it out to the dumpster and ask that God would make them somehow feel lighter with the trash gone. Thankfully, I was able to clean up the mess someone else created so I could remember that this is what Jesus has always done for me. This kind of *humus* earthly practice, this relentless humility in the small things of life was some of the best preparation for Jesus' following and for pastoring. In this way, I began to practice what doing as Jesus has done for me. These practices may seem so small and insignificant for you, but these and countless other practices are the ways we actually began to live our way into a new ways of thinking.

So many of us want to participate in big acts of solidarity with others and for the marginalized before we learn the art of humbly engaging in all the tiny things in life that can make us in solidarity with the way of Jesus. We want to be up front when we're supposed to be getting low first. And all too often when we don't do these small things first. We begin to make our humble

2019-05-19 *Learning the art of Gracious Integrity*

acts of service more about us than the people we serve. We don't just one day magically become life-laying-down allies for the marginalized, especially if it's at the cost of our own advancement. This is a result of living our way into a new way of thinking in a million small ways. And so I want to offer you to take a humility challenge and to take it out of the category of world peace. Like, if you never know if it's actually happening. Like, "Oh I'm being humble." How? "I'm working on humility." In what way? So I want to give you some humility challenges to put into practice. What it looks like to get to the real dirt of this. So here the challenges. First is that today there's an opportunity for you to participate in foot washing. Now I've heard this is not your custom here, and so this will be awkward for some of you. But I'm going to encourage you to participate in the act of foot washing. After I'm done and we say the words of institution over these elements, I'm going to go and kneel in front of one chair and somebody is going to come in front of that chair who wants to and I'm simply going to wash your feet. Because I think it is important for that first interpretation for you to know that you're loved in your most intimate places, places that you generally just keep your shoes on for. And then after I wash your feet, you're going to come and kneel in front of the other chair and get ready to wash the next person's feet. And so you will both, if you come up, have your feet washed — first interpretation of being humble — and then kneel in front of somebody else — the second practical work of practicing relentless humility. There is a little scoop for water out of the larger thing and then when you're done washing feet, you can just pour it into the blue bin. And you can start with a fresh container and there are fresh towels for each person that comes in. So I want to encourage you to participate in that.

The second challenge is to pick up a *humus*-y earthy commission, an invitation to bring relentless humility into real life. I've put them in these little glasses. There's about 10 different ones. If you could take one or two. If you like the whole sheet of them I did print out the whole list that I made, it's out on the table right when you come in the front door. But here are some options: You might want to initiate a conversation with someone whose viewpoint you disagree with and then don't offer your viewpoint afterwards [laughter]. Without taking any credit for it, just clean up a mess that's not yours. At a moment when you feel loved and included in your own group of friends, look around and find someone who might be sitting alone. You can scroll through your list of contacts and you know who that might be. Take courage, leave your group to go introduce yourself to a person who is outside your group. Maybe you want to ask God if there's a prideful part in you. Invite God to speak directly to that part of you that wants its own way, that wants to be God. Invite God to give you some specific instructions about how to move forward in a more humble way. Or maybe you want to give way this week. Maybe every time you come to a stop sign you want to practice humility by giving way. Maybe you want to let everybody merge. Do you think that's *not* a spiritual discipline [laughter]? There's reasons I had

2019-05-19 *Learning the art of Gracious Integrity*

to walk across America and not drive. This is a discipline that I can benefit from. There are six others and if you want to challenge yourself to do this relentless humility, to begin to wear down those sharp edges in yourself and the course edges of your life, then maybe you will begin to wear down these rough edges in the world. I challenge you as you come forward to communion to just take one of those little things or take a couple and then let the people in your family, or your group, or your people know what they are to hold you accountable.

One more thing before we come to this table. This is the Passover Lamb, the sacrifice of my body and blood that you're going to put over the door post of your life. This causes death to pass over us. This table is the ultimate celebration of a Son of God who was the most vulnerable, who did not come to be served but to serve and give his life for many. Before you come to the table, I want to note one final thing. Back to the lack of self I mentioned in the beginning. People say that, Oh, being humble is a lack of self like you're nothing. You're a nobody. That's been in the humble condition. In verse 3 it says Jesus knew the father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God, and was returning to God. So he got up from his position of power and took off his rabbi robe, and then he got low and washed feet. I think one of the reasons it's so difficult for us to be humble is we forget who we are. It is not a lack of self that makes us humble. It's when we actually know who we are that we're able to risk letting it all go. I know I am one of God's favorites, like everybody else. And it's because of that that humility doesn't feel like a loss of self. I could never lose that self. Jesus, knowing he had come from God and was returning to God, became humble. And so today as you come to the table or as you participate in foot washing, I would want you to know that you are one of Jesus' favorites, like everybody else. And you can't ever lose that, which is why you can give yourself away. The better news is that when we humble ourselves and allow Jesus to kneel in front of us and wash us over and over, when we enter that humility, we become whole and our rough edges get worn down. And the better news is that when we relentlessly humble ourselves in the service of others with no high places and no airs of importance and no looking down our noses, the sharp edges of the world begin to get worn down, too.

And so today as we come to the table with the Jesus we want communion with, to take him into our lives, we invite him to become a part of us in the fullness of this life-laying-down communion. We take communion here at Artisan by intinction, which means you will take a piece of bread and you will dip it in the cup. There is gluten free and there's both wine and juice and they are all labeled and you will take both of them at the same time. If you forget and you take the bread before the juice, take another piece of bread. Jesus so generous — the loaves and fishes and all. And if you take a piece of bread and it was too small and Jesus floats away, well, take another piece because Jesus does not float away [laughter]. And you'll take both of them at the same time. So let me pray and after we do, you're welcome to come to this table as

2019-05-19 *Learning the art of Gracious Integrity*

we worship and I will join whomever would like over on the side. Lord God, we're so grateful that this is your table, not ours. That you want to us to hinder no one from coming, that you are our gracious host and you want everyone — no looking down your nose. No airs about it, but indeed taking off your outer robe and kneeling in front of us. Then you invite us to come and put our most vulnerable self in front of the most vulnerable God. That we thank you that gave up your life on our behalf so that we might know life. We just place it over the door post of our life one more time and just ask that, indeed, we might know life and life abundantly. On the night Jesus was betrayed he took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, "This is my body that is broken for you. Do this in remembering me." Put me back into your membership. "In the same way he took the cup after supper and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. As often as you drink it, do it in remembering me,' putting me back into your membership. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death," his getting low, until he comes again.

[end of sermon]

[Male voice] For more information visit us at ArtisanChurch.com