



*April 30, 2023*  
*“Faith or Unbelief”*

*SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.*

News:

**Wednesday Evening Classes 6:30-8:00**  
**Church Workday Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup>**

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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Jesus was faithful. Faithfulness is Godly \_\_\_\_\_ that can be counted on, no matter what.

Jesus knew what He had to do, and He was going to do it, but just because He overcame His emotions, it doesn’t mean that it was \_\_\_\_\_.

That gives us comfort in knowing that Jesus can personally \_\_\_\_\_ with our struggle.

Faith is what enables a person to do what is right instead of taking the easy way out. Faith itself is only as strong as the \_\_\_\_\_ of God effective in one’s life.

What is your duty? \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ God, \_\_\_\_\_ the church, and \_\_\_\_\_ the lost.

If you do that, it will \_\_\_\_\_ you personally in this life.

Only when you live God’s purpose for your life, can your life have true meaning and purpose. You \_\_\_\_\_ concurrently live your purpose and God’s purpose.

We are called to Love those whom we can most directly affect \_\_\_\_\_. We tend to do the opposite because it’s far \_\_\_\_\_. Start local.

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

**JOHN 12:34-36 ~**

While the Jews disagreed on many elements of the Messiah's arrival, they were unanimous in their absolute belief that He would immediately usher in the \_\_\_\_\_ with the Jews on top.

What they couldn't have ever imagined was that all of the contradictory prophecies were perfectly true concerning only \_\_\_\_\_ Messianic figure.

The way all of it becomes completely true is in a first appearance where the Messiah Saves through His Own sacrificial death and then \_\_\_\_\_ as the conquering King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Jesus didn't answer them directly, but instead went into another exhortation to simply \_\_\_\_\_ to Him and believe. Why didn't Jesus just explain?

It wouldn't have helped and may actually have hurt. I think part of our problem in sharing the Gospel today, at least in the western world, is that we \_\_\_\_\_.

When we Christians attempt to answer all the \_\_\_\_\_ a person has, inevitably it only creates more \_\_\_\_\_ of greater magnitude and complexity.

To emphasize His point Jesus hid Himself from them. What He said in His words and actions was that they needed to put their full \_\_\_\_\_ in Him as God's True Light and follow Him wherever that \_\_\_\_\_. Otherwise, after He was no longer physically with them, they would be in the darkness again.

**JOHN 12:37-43 ~**

Why did no one understand? The key to really understanding this is Isaiah chapters 52 and 53.

It was always God's \_\_\_\_\_ and from His perspective it was the only way that it \_\_\_\_\_ go and so the only way that it \_\_\_\_\_ go.

It all has to do with Truth with a capital "T." Isaiah spoke and revealed God's Truth to the people, and they did not want to \_\_\_\_\_ it. Where such Truth would bring Salvation and that is its purpose, such rejection of it brings Judgment and that is its \_\_\_\_\_. Truth is a two-edged sword that cuts both ways.

Then John gives us another category of people, those who believe in Jesus, but not enough to risk much. The same condemnation awaits the \_\_\_\_\_.

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_



# lêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP




lêtheia  
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

the gospel of

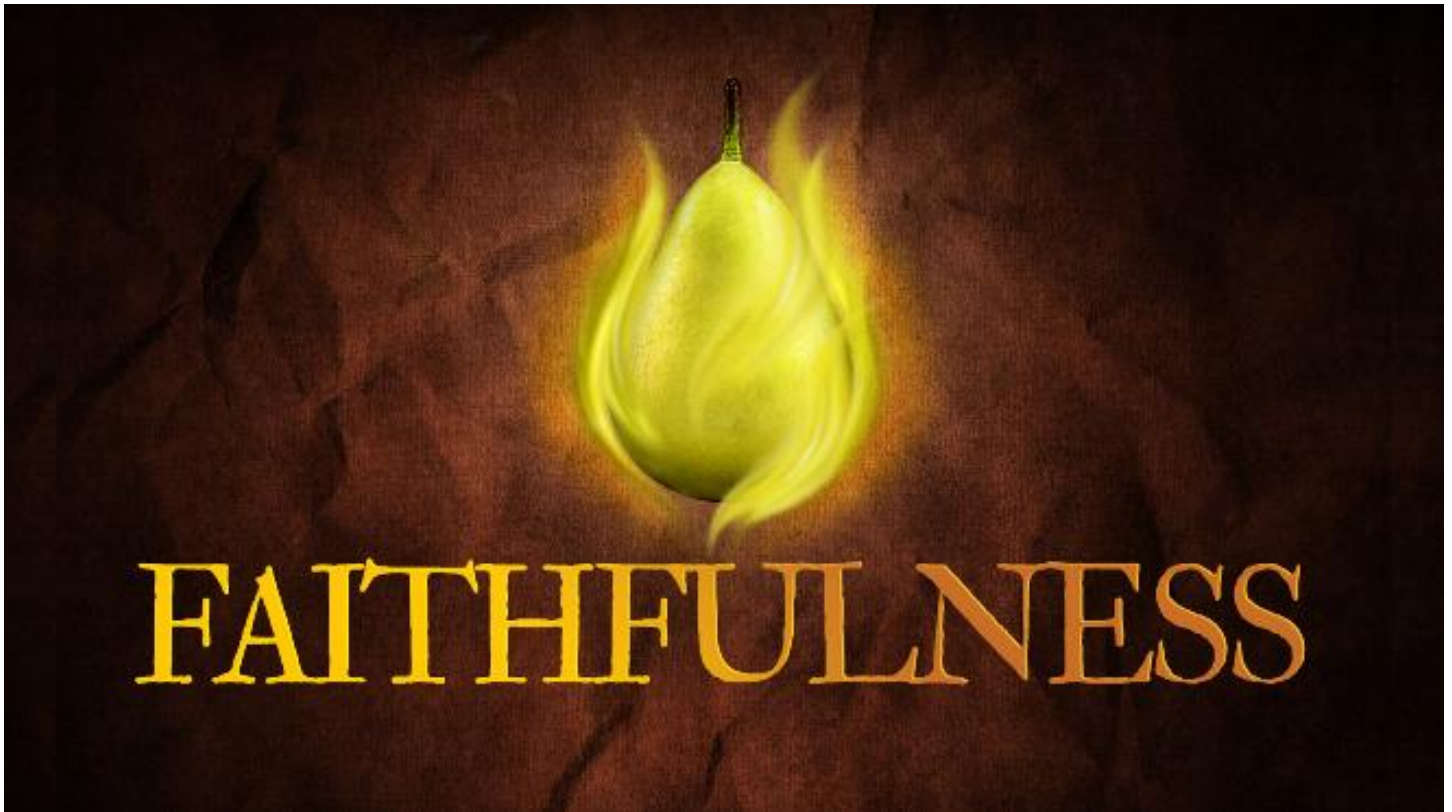
# JOHN

ΕΝΑΡΧΗ Η ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΗΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΝ  
 ΘΝ ΚΑΙ ΘΕ ΤΗ ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΥ ΤΟΣ Η ΝΕΝΑΡΧΗ ΤΙΡΟΣ  
 ΤΟΝ ΘΝ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΕΓΕΝΕ ΤΟ ΚΑΧΑΤΙΣ

Last week we talked about the very real emotions that Jesus was experiencing as His date with the executioner rapidly approached.

As I said, it's important to recognize the humanness of Jesus to appreciate the nature of His sacrifice on our behalf, not just as excruciatingly torturous physically, but also as unbearably agonizing psychologically and emotionally. Talk about PTSD!

Jesus fully understood, and embraced, His mission, His duty, His purpose, which is to say, God's purpose for His existence... That which gave meaning to His life just as it is the only thing that can give meaning to your life. He and God were on the same sheet of music as Jesus had submitted Himself to the Father's Will, and as such, His performance of His duty was never in question.



Jesus was faithful. Faithfulness is Godly Goodness that can be counted on, no matter what. Are you faithful? It is an element in the Fruit of the Holy Spirit we are all supposed to have. How are we doing with that?

Jesus knew what He had to do, and He was going to do it, but please don't mistake His unshakeable resolve for anything less than faithful perseverance through what was a long and intensely difficult mission with a known terminus. Just because He overcame His emotions, it doesn't mean that it was easy, or that they didn't exist.

That gives us comfort in knowing that Jesus can personally identify with our emotional turmoil and the resultant temptations to give in to those feelings rather than to faithfully do our duty. There's a lot more than could be said here, but probably the most important is that faith is what enables a person to do what is right instead of taking the easy way out. Faith itself is only as strong as the love of God effective in one's life.



To put it another way, the amount of Agapê that you've allowed yourself to embrace and possess is directly proportional to the amount of faith you have, which in turn is the thing that can enable you to overcome your fear and do what God asks. That is why perfect love, Agapê, drives out fear. It does it by making your faith

greater than your fears. That is why Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will obey My commands." Do your duty.

What is your duty? Love. Love God with the love He gives to you, love your fellow Christian starting right here, right now, and love the lost enough to share Christ. In other words, allow Jesus to minister to 1) God, minister to 2) the church, and minister to 3) the unsaved, through you.

If you do that, it will cost you. It will cost you personally in this life. The question is what will you do? Will you ask for an easier mission? Will you refuse to follow your orders? What will you do?



Only when you live God's purpose for your life, can your life have true meaning and purpose. Perhaps I need to explain further... If you live to accomplish your own purpose, you may accomplish fantastic things from a human perspective. You may live the fullest, most enjoyable, invigorating, and actualized life anyone has ever lived.

All of that is incredibly unlikely, by the way, but let's just go with it. One thing that everyone agrees on is that the earth will someday be utterly destroyed - no trace of this old world will survive the future. All evidence of you, your achievements, your happiness, your inner peace, will vanish in the blink of an eye. Where is purpose and meaning then? Conversely, if you live God's purpose, the record and remembrance of that will last for eternity. "What good is it to gain the whole world and lose your soul?"

What we think is that "we can have our cake and eat it too." Jesus said that was impossible, so each person must choose. You cannot concurrently live your purpose and God's purpose.

Now, when living in His purpose, which is to say, when walking in His Will, it's additionally both incredibly



comforting and freeing. Whatever happens, you know that it's okay, because you're right where you're supposed to be - you're right where the one and only omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, God wants you to be. What's better than that?

Find God's path for you and walk it. Now, the inevitable question is how do I find God's path for me? It's incredibly simple and the answer is repeatedly given in Scripture. It's only one thing, and we've already discussed it this morning.

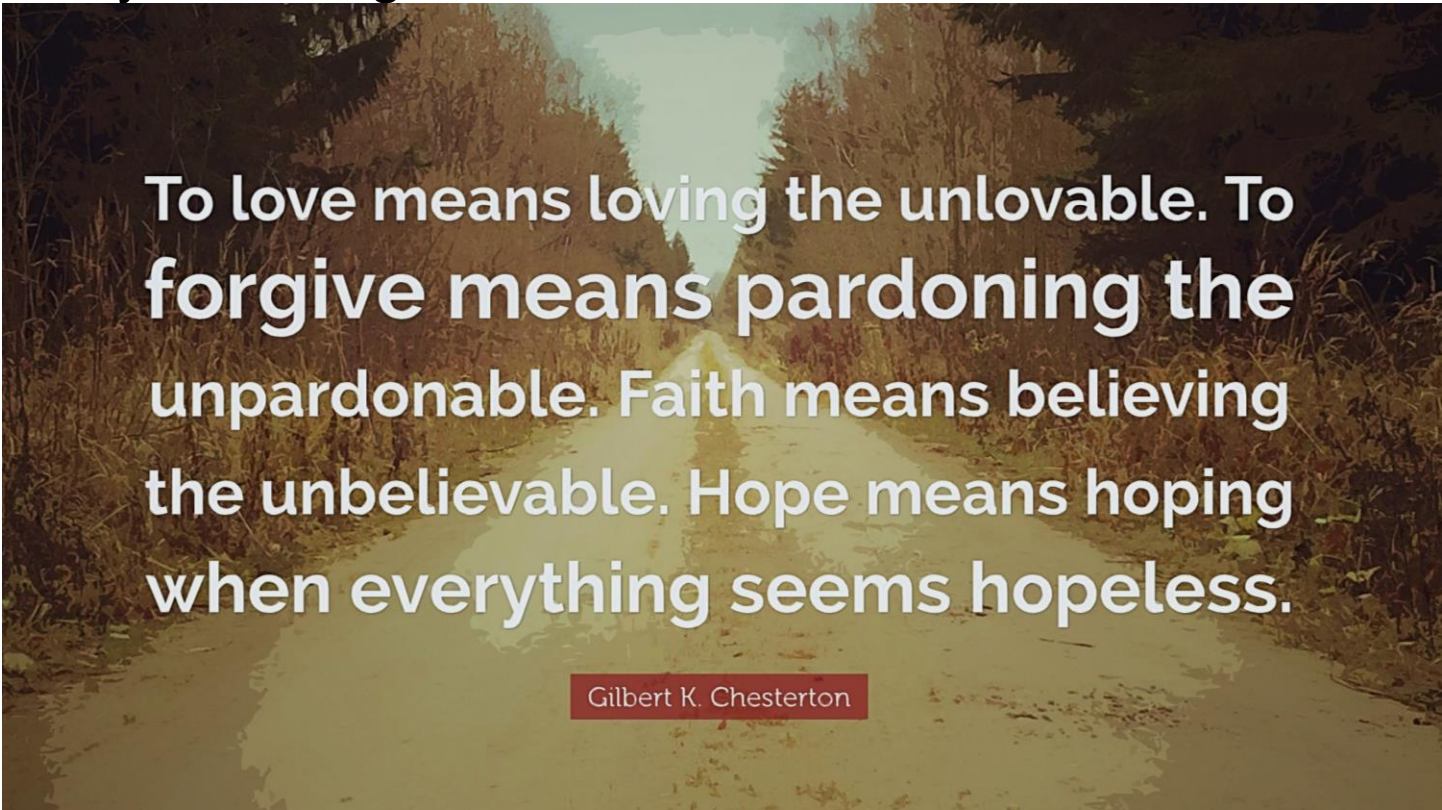
Love with the Love God gives. While it's True that God Loves everyone, His Love that comes in excess, His Love that is shareable, is only available to people who have embraced Him and are in right relationship with Him - i.e., Christians. Just to be clear, you must first be a Christian for any of this to work. You cannot possibly live God's purpose for your life without first living His most essential purpose of Salvation. Be His, is the first obvious step.



As a Christian, now overfilled with God's Love, Love God with that ever-faithful Love of His. Unconditional Love for God Loves Him with everything that you've got all the time, without fail, regardless of circumstances. That means Love Him when He fails to live up to your expectations, recognizing that it was your expectation that was faulty, not God! Love God with your heart, with your mind, with your soul, with your strength. That means: Hold nothing back from Him, not your labor, your wealth, or your possessions; not your hopes, your dreams, or your passions; not your time, your plans, or your intentions. With great intentionality, make Him first in your life in every area of your life. Do nothing without

first prayerfully considering whether it is what God desires you to do.

How can I stop and pray before every decision you might ask? It is easily accomplished by the person who is already connected with God, by always thinking about and internally communing with Him. Be prayed up, be on Holy Ground, be led by the Holy Spirit within you. That starts with an awareness of Whose you are, to Whom you belong. You were purchased with a price, and you belong to Him.



To love means loving the unlovable. To forgive means pardoning the unpardonable. Faith means believing the unbelievable. Hope means hoping when everything seems hopeless.

Gilbert K. Chesterton

Loving Him with His Love includes doing what he desires - living His purpose and that in the broadest terms means that we Love more than God. In fact, it is

the Love for God that enables us to Love more than Him. So, following His lead, we Love human beings with His Love. Don't worry, you won't run out of His Love - there's plenty. Loving opens the way for more of His Love to flow through you. The actual activity of Loving God is often carried out by Loving other people. "If you love Me, you will obey My commands," said Jesus.

Biblically, our first obligation is to Love our immediate family starting with our spouse if we are married and starting with our parents if we are not yet married. For those who are independent unmarried adults the first priority varies - perhaps a sibling, an elderly parent, or a close friend. Beyond that comes any extended family members who are under your care and responsibility.

Next is the local church to which you belong as a member of that particular Christian family. Christians must be engaged with, be loyal to, and participate in, a local Christian Body to obey God. Christianity is a team sport - there is no such thing as lone wolf Christianity, there are just Christians who are so self-centered that they cannot be bothered to fellowship with others. Beyond that comes the wider church radiating out in

your community to eventually encompass the universal Body of Christ.

Next is the non-Christians and nominal Christians that God places in your path. Beyond them is the unsaved people rippling out further and further until finally include the whole earth.

Notice in all three areas of Loving others, we are called to Love those whom we can most directly affect first. We tend to do the opposite because it's far easier. It's far easier to Love a sweet old lady as a surrogate mother, than it is to deal with a hateful dad who has Alzheimer's. It's far easier to Love the persecuted church in North Korea by praying for them, than it is to help a person in our local church clean her house. It's far easier to Love a starving child in Ethiopia by sending them a monthly letter and a check, than it is to minister to the smelly, semi-stoned, homeless person asking you for a handout.

Start local - that's where God can have the greatest personalized impact on others through you, and it's where you will actually grow. Don't get me wrong, I encourage you to adopt a surrogate mom, I encourage you to adopt a persecuted church abroad, I encourage

you to adopt an impoverished kid and send money. Do that without neglecting the former.

If you cannot work on Loving your spouse better, as an example, you are wasting your time Loving others. Start local. While I'm on that let me give the same advice for your political duty as a citizen. Work as locally as possible first. Not a single person voting in the state of Montana has any say whatsoever in who is elected president - none. Whether you're a conspiracy theorist or a careful realist you know that the decision is entirely out of our hands. Montana, in its entirety, let alone you as an individual, has no say at all - the election is decided without any input from our state. You, as one person, can greatly affect who runs your homeowner's association, the local school board, and the County Commission. Local first.

We currently have a homelessness crisis in the Flathead Valley. You can be actively involved in finding solutions to that complicated problem. That would be acting locally as a citizen, but by doing it filled with God's Love for the actual human beings at the heart of the issue, you would also be acting locally as a Christian. Approaching that matter as God's ambassador, with a balanced and genuine concern for

both the community and for the homeless people, perhaps you would find answers that 1) honor God, 2) actually helps the homeless, 3) makes your neighborhood safer, and 4) builds His Kingdom on earth.

So, it's incredibly easy to find God's purpose for your life, it's just difficult to actually do it. All you need to do is think in terms of, how can I, with my resources, really bless God, my closest relatives, my church family members, and the lost people God puts in my path? Then do it.



Jesus just said, "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am

lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.” John added an editor’s note in verse 33, “Now He was saying this to indicate what kind of death He was going to die.” Did the people get it? Well, evidently, they did - at least a little, as we read...

John 12:34-36, 34The crowd then answered Him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how is it that You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”35So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; also, the one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. 36While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.” These things Jesus proclaimed, and He went away and hid Himself from them.





While the Jews disagreed on many elements of the Messiah's arrival, they were unanimous in their absolute belief that He would immediately usher in the new world order with the Jews on top. That was fundamental, universally accepted orthodoxy. God's Anointed One, a descendant of King David from the Tribe of Judah, would utterly eradicate all opposition and establish the Kingdom of God on Earth centered in Jerusalem with the Jewish nation perfectly in tune with God and physical masters over all others. That rule, reign and kingdom would have no end. They expected Jesus to trade His donkey in for a war horse and make all of the people around Him invincible and give them

each their own war horse and begin a reign of terror against all those who humiliated the Jews.

The crowd was confused because their expectation regarding the Messiah's role as conqueror and eternal king on earth was absolutely set in stone and it was absolutely opposite of what Jesus, the purported Messiah was saying.

It wasn't like the Jews were completely off base here. Their agreed upon elements of the Messiah's person and work was all based upon the same Scriptures we hold inerrant. The Jews fully understood that there were seemingly contradictory prophecies about the Messiah. It was in that area that they held many divergent ideas and disagreed with each other over. Was there a prophet and a Son of Man and were those two characters different than the Messiah?

What they couldn't have ever imagined was that all of the contradictory prophecies were perfectly true concerning only one Messianic figure. Why? because that was impossible. It simply cannot be, unless, of course, the Messiah arrives on the planet twice.

The way all of it becomes completely true is in a first appearance where the Messiah Saves through His Own sacrificial death and then returns again as the conquering King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

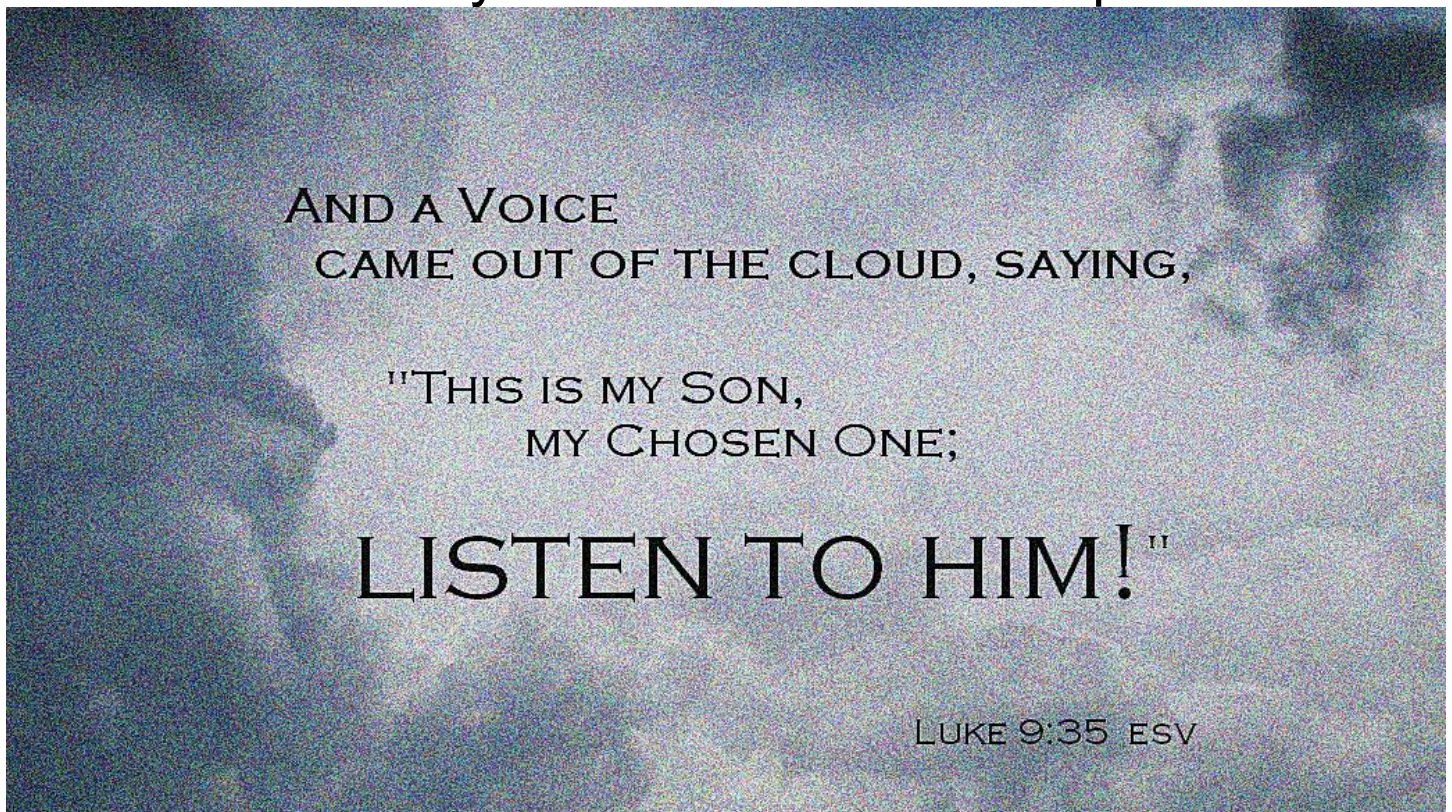
That's super easy to see now that we have an entire New Testament to explain the Old Testament. Before the Resurrection, literally no one knew how this was going to play out. Prophecies are often crystal clear, but only after they have been fulfilled, never beforehand.



That's why Christians who think that they have Christ's second coming all figured out amuse me. You may think that you understand eschatology and the Book of

Revelation, but trust me, you don't. Regarding the Book of Revelation, Augustine, one of the most brilliant Christian scholars of all time and a man far closer to the Apostle John than any of us, said concerning the Book of Revelation, "Quite frankly, I don't know what John was on about."

So, the crowd didn't understand what was going on with Jesus and they confronted Him about it - whether respectfully or otherwise, they challenged His statements as they conflicted with their expectations.



Jesus didn't answer them directly, but instead went into another exhortation to simply listen to Him and believe. That's at the heart of His metaphorical statements

here. Why did Jesus choose to use metaphors about Light and darkness, when He could have just plainly explained to them that the Son of Man was the Son of God and was the Messiah come to die, in order to Save them from their sin and legalism, then, that He would eventually return in a Second Coming as the victorious King?

Monumental waste of time - is the reason. It wouldn't have helped and may actually have hurt.

Overexplaining. I think that's part of our problem in sharing the Gospel today, at least in the western world - we overexplain.



# TRUE MINISTRY

*1 Thessalonians*

When Jesus comes up against a person's preconceived ideas, opinions, and expectations, a little help is warranted. Simple concepts can be addressed, and misunderstandings explained but we nearly always go too far, turning it into an endless discussion, or debate, or argument.

When we Christians attempt to answer all the objections a person has, inevitably it only creates more objections of greater magnitude and complexity.

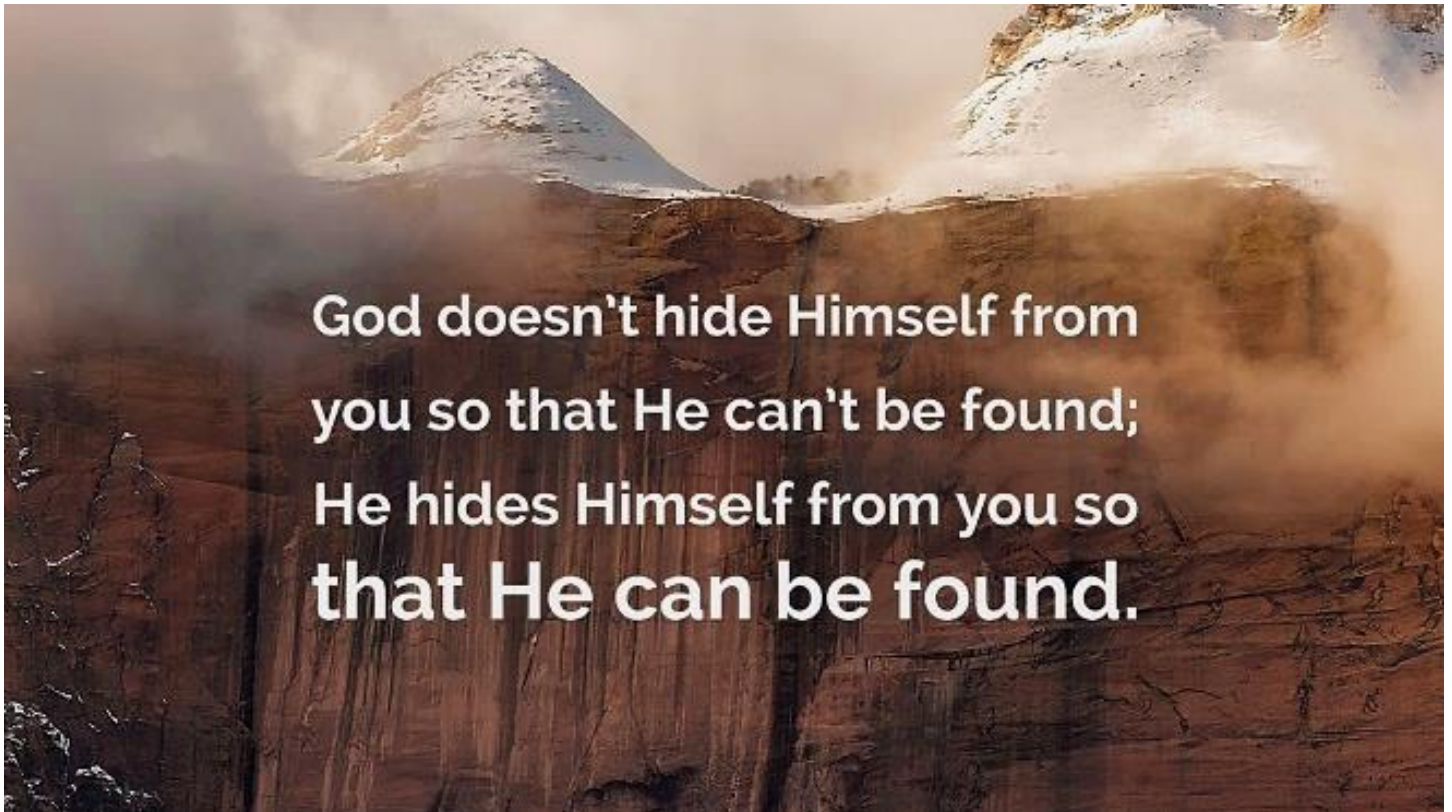
There is an absolutely true statement that "You cannot argue someone into Heaven." Christian apologists hate that, but the only ones who would disagree are too immature, too dumb, or too arrogant to grasp the realities involved. An apologist pushing back on that idea said, "Well, if that's true, you cannot love them into Heaven either." Absolutely true also. In fact, you cannot bribe them, coerce them, serve them, cajole them, or beat them into Heaven either. The only thing that can ever get through to a person is the Holy Spirit.

It is irrelevant how convincing, how intelligent, how exciting, how emotional your evangelistic efforts are, nothing you do, or don't do, can change a human

heart. It is only ever the Holy Spirit ministering through Christians that accomplishes anything.

Be faithful in the evangelistic ministry you have, but never for a moment think that it's about you. In addition, realize that a hardened heart is not softened by pouring more information, love, help, whatever into the operation. At some point, you need to say to a person, "You know enough, you've seen and experienced enough, you've received enough, to make a stand. What do you believe? In Whom do you trust with your eternity and then why wouldn't you trust Him with your present?"

Jesus knew that further explanation of the details of God's eternal plan wasn't going to help. They knew enough. It was time for them to either trust Him and follow Him in His Light, or to stay in the darkness. He basically said, it's up to you, "choose today Whom you will serve."



God doesn't hide Himself from  
you so that He can't be found;  
He hides Himself from you so  
**that He can be found.**

To emphasize His point Jesus supernaturally hid Himself from them. Imagine... you can't find Jesus. That wouldn't seem like a big deal if you're not looking for Him. If you're already stumbling around in the darkness and are content to stay there, you wouldn't even notice. If you were like most of the people there back then, it would be disappointing, because you were there to see something spectacular, and the star of the show became a no show.

We will see that none of the people around Jesus really understood what was going on, but they were all terribly excited to have front row seats to whatever it was. Jesus basically told them in words and then in His



absence, that they needed to get their priorities straight.

What He said in His words and actions was that they needed to put their full trust in Him as God's True Light and follow Him wherever that led. Otherwise, after He left, after He was no longer physically with them, it would be the same as if they had never looked at the Light - they would still be in the darkness.

For the Christian person 20 centuries later there are times, when it feels as though Jesus has left the building. It seems as though "Jesus went away and hid Himself from" us. That's when we must redouble our focus on staying the course that we were holding when we had our last confirmation.

Bryan and Amy have both been flying in what is called IMC. That's instrument meteorological conditions. Both of them can tell you how disconcerting it is to be unable to see anything outside of the airplane. When you are flying and lose all visual reference it seems like it would be easy to simply transition fully to the cockpit instruments and continue on your merry way. Again, Amy and Bryan can tell you that it isn't nearly that easy. It requires fairly intense focus to stay on those

instruments crosschecking them with one another constantly. It gets way easier with a lot of practice.

It's the same with following Jesus. Sometimes Jesus will intentionally hide Himself. You must believe that He's still there, that you're doing fine, and that you must trust in what you know. If Jesus is always actively holding your hand, you'll never grow up. The more you trust Him, the easier it gets.



UNBELIEF

John 12:37-43, 37But though He had performed so many signs in their sight, they still were not believing in Him. 38This happened so that the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke would be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of

the Lord been revealed?” 39For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, 40“He has blinded their eyes and He Hardened their heart, so that they will not see with their eyes and understand with their heart, and be converted, and so I will not heal them.” 41These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke about Him. 42Nevertheless many, even of the rulers, believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, so that they would not be excommunicated from the synagogue; 43for they loved the approval of people rather than the approval of God.

This is a lengthy editor’s note between the second and third sections of Jesus’ final public address. In it we have confirmation that none of the people really got it, and it explains the judgment upon this world that Jesus talked about earlier.

Why did no one understand? The narrative here is quite straightforward, but we don’t really like the implication, so we try to bend it to our comfort zone. Some harsh holier-than-thou types might say, “See no need to evangelize, the hearts of the people have been hardened by God and only He can soften such a heart and will do so quite nicely without us getting involved in

the messiness of other people's sinful lives." The humanistic bunch will say well what it means is that the people choose not to listen, and the hardness of heart is a byproduct of that continued unbelief.

There's a certain bit of Truth in both. God's sovereignty is the emphasis for sure. The key to really understanding this is Isaiah chapters 52 and 53. The quote is Isaiah 53:1, but for context, you need to read the chapter before and the chapter after. The first question, "Lord, who has believed our report?" implies that the Jews had heard and obviously refused to believe. That's chapter 52. The second question, "And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Implies that the "Arm of the Lord," which is another title for the Messiah, has come, and will do what God promised, not only in Saving the Jews, but in Saving the Gentiles as well. That's the transition between chapters 52 and 53. The remainder of chapter 53 reveals that the method of deliverance is entirely unexpected. I'll read a bit...

Verse 3b, "He was despised, and we had no regard for Him. 4However, it was our sicknesses that He Himself bore, And our pains that He carried; Yet we ourselves assumed that He had been afflicted, Struck down by

God, and humiliated. 5But He was pierced for our offenses, He was crushed for our wrongdoings; The punishment for our well-being was laid upon Him, And by His wounds we are healed. 6All of us, like sheep, have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the wrongdoing of us all To fall on Him.” Very familiar stuff, so I’ll drop all the way down to verse 12b “He poured out His life unto death, And was counted with wrongdoers; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the wrongdoers.”

It was always God’s plan and from His perspective it was the only way that it would go and so the only way that it could go. Well, that works both ways. You cannot have a Suffering Servant if you don’t have sinful oppressors. We can’t really get into it any deeper today, but if you have questions, please read Romans chapter 10. Or, come to Sunday school, or do both.

John makes what is implied in the Isaiah reference explicit in verse 39, “For this reason they could not believe,” and uses a reference from Isaiah chapter 6 to further explain. In that section of Isaiah, we get the same basic concept that we see when Jesus repeatedly and emphatically stated that He had not

come to Judge, but to Save, yet in other places He said that judgment was upon mankind because He came.

It all has to do with Truth with a capital "T." As the character from the movie said, "You can't handle the Truth!" Well, historically, we humans can't handle God's Truth. Isaiah the Prophet spoke as a mouthpiece for God and revealed God's Holy and perfect Truth to the people and they did not want to hear it. Where such Truth would bring Salvation and that is its purpose, such rejection of it brings Judgment and, get this, that's its purpose also. Truth is a two-edged sword that cuts both ways.

Jesus said in Luke 7:23, "Blessed is the one who does not take offense at Me." Jesus simply and bluntly told the absolute Truth and people for 2,000 years have taken offense and refused to believe thereby bringing Judgment upon themselves.

Then John gives us another category of people, those who believe in Jesus, but not enough to risk much. The same condemnation awaits the lukewarm as awaits the fierce unbeliever.

The desire for the approval of people is just one way in which we love the world and simultaneously fear the world, more than we take God seriously. At the end of the day, it is a lack of faith... It is unbelief. Unbelief because we have not appropriated enough of God's Love.



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It was always God’s plan and from His perspective it was the only way that it would go and so the only way that it could go.

It all has to do with Truth with a capital “T.” Isaiah spoke and revealed God’s Truth to the people, and they did not want to hear it. Where such Truth would bring Salvation and that is its purpose, such rejection of it brings Judgment and that is its purpose also. Truth is a two-edged sword that cuts both ways.

Then John gives us another category of people, those who believe in Jesus, but not enough to risk much. The same condemnation awaits the lukewarm.

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_