

That You May Believe

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- [0 : 0 0] In his famous novel, Gulliver's Travel, the author and Christian minister, Jonathan Swift, takes his protagonist, Lemuel Gulliver, to the island of Luggnag.
- And there he encounters the Strolbergs, who are immortal. And about that he writes, he's delighted, happy nation where every child hath at least a chance for being immortal.
- So happy people who, being born exempt from that universal calamity of human nature, have their minds free and disengaged without the weight and depression of spirits caused by the continual apprehensions of death.
- Then the Gulliver's interpreter acknowledges that it is true that long life is the universal desire and wish of mankind, that whoever had one foot in the grave was sure to hold back the other as strongly as he could, that the oldest had still hopes of living one day longer and looked on death as the greatest evil, from which nature always prompted him to retreat.
- Unfortunately for the Strolbergs, even though they're immortal, they still age. So they basically have eternal senility. I mean, they're senile for the rest of their lives.
- [1 : 1 6] But of course, that's not what we long for. But it's true, isn't it, that we long for eternal life. It's found in every culture. It's seen really in every religion. But it's not the kind of eternal senility of the Strolbergs, but eternal life, something vibrant that lasts forever.
- So Solomon writes about this in Ecclesiastes 3, verse 11. God has put eternity into man's heart. But how do we attain it?
- Sure, the fact that we long for life after death, for eternal life, doesn't mean that it exists, much like the English poet Matthew Arnold who said, nor does the being hungry prove that we have bread.
- That is undoubtedly true. The fact that we're hungry doesn't prove that we have bread, but does it not prove that bread, such a thing as bread, exists? Does it not prove that our hunger is supposed to be met?
- So what is this longing we have for meaning and significance after death, for eternal life? And if we do not now possess immortality, but does it not suggest that we need eternal life, that there's such a thing as eternal life?
- [2 : 3 2] And the answer to all these questions lies in Easter, Resurrection Sunday, as we also call it, when we celebrate the day when Jesus Christ rose from the day, third day after his death on the cross.
- So then all that your soul most longs for, the dearest hopes that you have ever held, can be true because and only because Jesus rose again from the dead.
- As one theologian, Yaroslav Pelikan says, if the resurrection is not true, then nothing else matters. Because it all ends in death.
- When the sun burns away, there will be no one left to remember anything we ever did. But he also says, if the resurrection is true, then nothing else matters. Because that would be the most important thing, the thing that matters most.

And John teaches from this passage, that Jesus died and rose again, so that by believing that he is the son of God, we might receive eternal life.

[3 : 36] That's his very purpose for writing this book. And he demonstrates this by recording several witnesses, who saw and believed. So first is himself, and then Mary, the disciples, and Thomas.

And he writes all of this, so that ultimately, the future generations, those who do not see, might believe. That's the purpose of him, recording these witnesses, who saw and believed.

So that's the outline we will follow as we go. So first, John, he sees and believes. Verse 1 with me says, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early.

So that's, first character encounter is Mary, although this will talk first about John. And it's remarkable that, even though Jesus rose again from death, on the third day, every single gospel writer notes, that it was on the first day of the week, that Jesus rose from the dead.

They do that intentionally, to point to the fact, that Jesus makes all things new. The first day of the week, that's when Jesus rose from the dead, and it's in Jesus that we have hope.

[4 : 40] And that's why Christians, even though most of the early Christians were Jews, who had for centuries been worshiping on the Sabbath, on a Saturday, they transformed that practice, and started worshiping on a Sunday, right, to commemorate that.

So that's the significance of that. And read the rest of the verse 1 with me. So now, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

So Mary Magdalene was one of the faithful devotees of Jesus, and she had seen previously where he was laid. So she, as soon as the Sabbath is over, as the light is coming back, she goes to the tomb.

But it says that she goes still, while it was still dark, right? And it notes that, because John uses the motif of light and darkness, as we have seen over and over again, to indicate spiritual state.

She does not yet know, that Jesus has risen from the, she does not yet understand, the meaning of Jesus' death. And so she's still in darkness. And so she, while it was still dark, she approaches.

[5 : 45] And the other gospel writers note that there were other women that came with Mary. They came to anoint, to put spices on his body. And, but John intentionally mentions only Mary Magdalene, probably because he wants to highlight the fact that she was the first witness of the resurrection.

The other gospel writers also note that by always naming Mary Magdalene first. And, and they're probably coming and wondering how they were going to move that large stone that Pilate had placed there to guard the tomb.

And the Roman guards, and, and so they have fears, and they're coming and approaching the tomb. But when they come, she sees that, Mary Magdalene sees that the tomb, the stone has already been rolled away.

And that, that could mean only one thing. Because, because John told us in chapter 19, verse 41, Jesus was buried in a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid.

He told us that intentionally, to, to suggest that, you know what, if he's something, if the body's missing from there, it could mean nothing else. There was only one body in that tomb.

[6 : 57] So if Jesus is missing from there, that means Jesus is gone, not someone else. And so, it says in verses two to four, she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, that's John, and said to them, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.

So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter, and reached the tomb first. So John outruns Peter, and reaches the tomb first, and their reactions are recorded in the following verses, five to nine.

And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloth lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloth lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloth, but folded up in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed. For as yet, they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

So it's a cave tomb, and so they stoop in. John first gets a stoop, but he doesn't go in. But Peter, as we know from his character, that's portrayed throughout the Gospels, he's the brash one. He runs right in, and to see what's in there, to see what's in there.

[8 : 23] And when they go, they see the linen cloth still there, and the face cloth, it's folded up by its side. So that's an indication that this was not a grave robbery.

If they did, they would not take the time to remove the linen cloth from the body that they're trying to steal. And in fact, that would be the main thing they would want, because the linen cloth with the expensive spices are what you would go for in a grave robbery during this time.

That's not what happened. It also doesn't mean that the Romans moved his body, because if they did, they would similarly not leave the linen spice there. They would have to do it somewhere else. Why would they do that?

And so that's why John includes that detail. And the specific detail that the face cloth was folded up in a place by itself, that's an intentional contrast with Lazarus, who was raised by Jesus earlier in the Gospel of John and from the dead.

But Lazarus was raised to mortal life, to be sick and to die again. But Jesus was raised to resurrection life, immortality, eternal life.

[9 : 28] And so there is a difference, because Lazarus, when he was raised by Jesus, he said he came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips and his face wrapped with the cloth, and so that Jesus had to tell other people to unbind him and let him go.

But Jesus, in contrast, rose from the dead. In fact, he was in full possession of himself, in control of himself, he takes the time to fold the facial garment, the cloth, set it aside, and leaves.

It's a sign that someone who had no longer any need of those things put him aside and came out of the tomb. And notice verse 9, it says, it explains that up to this point, they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead.

So contrary to some people who would argue that the disciples fabricated the story of the resurrection in order to fit their preconceived notions about a Messiah rising from the dead, they had no idea that was what was supposed to happen.

Rather, it's the facts, the reality of what happened that shaped and informed their theology, their beliefs, their faith. And historically, the rapid growth of the early church can't be explained apart from an empty tomb, from the resurrection of Christ.

[10 : 45] The most popular counter-argument is that the claim that disciples stole the body so that they could, you know, tell people, you know, that Jesus rose from the dead.

And Matthew already anticipates this and writes about this in verse 28, 11, 15. He says, the Jewish authorities paid the soldiers who were guarding there when Jesus rose from the dead to lie to the people saying, his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.

But that theory is so far-fetched that Matthew doesn't even deign to defend against it because if they were sleeping and, in fact, so soundly asleep that they weren't able to do anything when his disciples came to steal his body, how would they know that it was his disciples, right?

I mean, they can't. Moreover, this explanation itself is an unwitting admission of the significant fact of the empty tomb, that it was indeed empty, that they needed to come up with something to explain it and make sense of it.

Nor does that explanation make sense of the fact that every single one of Jesus' apostles, save one, John, and save Judas, the betrayer, were martyred, proclaiming that Jesus rose from the dead.

[12 : 04] What was in it for them? Why would they perpetuate a lie that they don't even themselves believe? Some other people have suggested that Jesus didn't actually die, but only appeared to die.

And after three days in the tomb, he was resuscitated. He came back to life. Not only is that medically highly implausible, but that also defies common sense.

Think about a Christ who came out of the tomb enfeebled, scarred, literally half dead, and then imagine that same man convincing all his followers that he is the glorious son of God who rose from the dead.

It just doesn't fly. No one would believe him. The disciples were confronted with the fact of the empty tomb of the resurrected Christ, which then shaped and advanced their understanding of how Scripture foretold the resurrection.

They didn't invent it. What do you make of the empty tomb? The reality of resurrection confronts us today still in the worldwide celebration of Easter.

[13 : 15] I urge you today to not leave this place without having come to a decisive answer on that question. What do you make of the empty tomb? So John saw and believed.

Now we turn to Mary in verses 11 to 18. Read 11 to 13 with me. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had lain.

One at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, woman, why are you weeping? She said to them, they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him.

So all the gospel writers note that there were angels in Jesus' tomb. Mark and Luke call them men but that's very consistent with how Old Testament usually describes angels.

They describe angels as coming in form of men and so it's consistent with that and the description that they were in gleaming white garments is always consistent with the description of angels in the Bible. So these are angels that they're talking about.

[14 : 24] And then perhaps seeing another person maybe in her peripheral vision just behind her, Mary turns around and sees Jesus but she doesn't yet recognize him according to verse 14.

Now this may be due to the fact that it was still dark like I said before or it may be the fact that she was crying as the passage tells us and her eyes were still blurry or it may just be that she just didn't expect to see him.

I mean all of us are familiar with that experience when you see someone out of context you don't expect to see that person so you don't recognize that person. Maybe it says you're vacationing in a foreign country and then you see your neighbor there and you're like oh you just run right past them you don't recognize that person.

Or your friend whom you're only familiar with an informal context and you see them all of a sudden at work and formally dressed and you don't recognize that person. It could happen to all of us. So here Mary doesn't yet recognize Jesus.

So Jesus says to her verses 15 to 16 Woman why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? And supposing him to be the gardener she said to him Sir if you have carried him away tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away.

[15 : 37] Jesus said to her Mary and she turned and said to him on an Aramaic Rabboni which means teacher. So as soon as Jesus utters her name Mary probably in the same way he has always said it she immediately recognizes him and the despair and sadness that had weighed her down is transformed into amazement and joy and she addresses Jesus as she always has teacher.

and Jesus has said in John chapter 10 27 my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me so here Mary is one of the sheep that belong to him Jesus is the shepherd so when she hears his voice she responds and follows him she believes I believe he's calling some of you this morning and I pray that you'll recognize his voice and follow him also but this sweet reunion is short lived because Jesus says to her in verse 17 do not cling to me for I have not yet ascended to the father but go to my brothers and say to them I am ascending to my father and your father to my God and your God Jesus telling Mary that there's no need for her to hold on to him to cling to him because he's not about to just permanently disappear he's not yet ascended to the father instead he wants her to go and tell others because that now is a time to spread the news because he's still here and still he's going to appear to his disciples so he gives her a mission but go to my brothers and say to them this is not referring to his biological brothers but to the apostles which you see from what Mary does

I'm ascending to my father and your father to my God and your God and so verse 18 continues Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples I have seen the Lord and that he had said these things to her and by doing so Mary becomes the very first witness of the resurrected Jesus and the gospel writers record this because it's true in spite of the fact that according to the Jewish law of the time women were not allowed to bear testimony in court their witnesses were considered invalid yet notwithstanding that they make Mary Magdalene the very first witness because she was and it's not so fitting with what God does throughout history he's always taking the marginalized the weak and he uses them for his purposes and so Mary like John sees and believes and begins to spread the word so she goes to witness to the disciples and then Jesus himself appears among them read verses 19 and 20 with me on the evening of that day the first day of the week the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews

Jesus came and stood among them and said to them peace be with you when he had said this he showed them his hands and his side and the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord here and later in verse 26 John specifically notes that the doors were locked when Jesus came and stood among them and that's to highlight the miraculous nature of Jesus' appearance his resurrected body he somehow walked through a locked door or he materialized somehow in the room and so that's that's not a mortal body this is a resurrected body it's what Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 15 in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed for this perishable body must put on the imperishable and this mortal body must put on immortality so it's a foretaste of what we will all experience as Jesus followers will experience when Jesus returns so that's the resurrected body and as he stands among them

Jesus says to them peace be with you when he has said this he showed them his hands and side and the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord so they again see there's a theme here recurring theme of seeing and believing and Jesus pronounces God's peace over them he does it again in verse 21 so at one level peace is simply the greeting it's a typical Jewish greeting shalom but it's invested with much deeper meaning here after Jesus' death and resurrection because shalom means wholeness not just a peace not having conflict but a wholeness a sense of fitting very snugly to God's purpose and order and plan that's that wholeness that comes from being fit into God's plan so that's what the peace word peace conveys and it's not without forethought that Apostle Paul in all 13 of his New Testament letters uses grace and peace as the greeting for the believers have you ever had a sense that something is amiss in this world that something's about you about the world around you is off kilter is your conscience uneasy do you feel a spiritual emptiness the answer to all of that lies in Jesus when you accept him as your savior and lord and entrust your life to him his status before God the father becomes yours his righteousness becomes yours and as a result of that you have peace with God it's the peace that surpasses understanding it's unshakable the wholeness of sense of fitting snugly into God's order and purposes and apart from that peace with God we cannot have peace with one another

[21 : 38] Jesus continues to speak to his disciples in verses 21 to 22 peace be with you as the father has sent me even so I am sending you and when he has said this he breathed on them and said to them receive the Holy Spirit the word send is one of the most frequently used words in the entire gospel and it captures the idea that Jesus is the sent one of the father that John 3 17 said that God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him and we are sent on this same mission by Jesus not to condemn the world but to save the world through him and so Jesus had prayed this prayer for his disciples in chapter 17 verse 18 as you sent me into the world so I have sent them into the world so Christians those who follow Jesus are graciously involved and invited into this divine chain his mission the father sends the son the son sends the Holy Spirit and in that power of the Holy Spirit the church the body of believers is sent out to proclaim that message of salvation so then Christians are by definition missionaries the word missionary comes from the Latin word that means the exact same thing as the Greek word here that means sent that's who we are there's no alternative to be a Christian is to be a missionary and because of this mission urgency not complacency should characterize a Christian life we're not saved so that we can selfishly coast for the rest of our lives contented with our own salvation but we are saved and sent so that we can selflessly announce and reflect the good news of Jesus Christ to others and what's the goal of all this the salvation of all those whom God has given to his son in this world of course we should do all that we can to love our neighbors and serve them just Jesus commands that but if it ends there if we don't proclaim the message of salvation then our mission is incomplete and we have been faithless to Jesus our word and works must lead those in the world to salvation not merely greater harmony or equality the salvation eternal life that's the goal then knowing that this mission is too much for us to handle in our own strength

Jesus breathes on them and says to them receive the Holy Spirit this reference to the Holy Spirit much like the water that poured out from Jesus' side during his crucifixion is a symbolic preview of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost Jesus repeatedly connects the descent of the Holy Spirit to the ascent of the Son of God when Jesus ascends that's when the Holy Spirit descends to his believers and Jesus breathing on his disciples is reminiscent of God's creation in Genesis 2-7 when God creates man and breathes into his nostrils the breath of life thus life thus making him a living creature it's also it recalls prophet Ezekiel's experience in the valley of dry bones Ezekiel 37 verse 9 where God says to him prophesy to the breath prophesy son of man and say to the breath thus says the Lord God come from the four winds O breath and breathe on these slain that they may live and the breath of God there in that instance revitalizes the valley of dry bones and turns them into a living army so this breath of God that has generated power it creates life in those two instances and what Jesus does here by breathing has regenerated power he recreates life imparts spiritual life eternal life it's not the full impartation of the Spirit yet we know that from Acts 2 and Jesus instructs his disciples in Acts 1 wait for the promise of the Father because then they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them so this is instead a foretaste it's a preview and a promise that the fullness of the Spirit that is to come and John includes it here to make sure we understand that connection between the Son's ascent and the Spirit's descent

I hope you understand the staggering implications of this right because the Holy Spirit is the third person in the Triune God right this means that we are not only sent by God we're sent with God right the Spirit of God enlivens us and empowers us for mission and because of that our mission is destined for success because the Spirit of God goes with us that should alleviate any fear we might have that prevents us from telling people about Jesus this also obviates any use of force or manipulation on our part the salvation of the world doesn't depend on us not on our eloquence not on our persuasiveness it depends on God's power so since the church which is the family of believers goes with the Holy Spirit on Christ's mission it's no wonder then that Jesus says in verse 23 if you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven them if you withhold forgiveness from any it is withheld notice the words forgiven and withheld are in passive form and if you were to translate that a little more literally and woodenly it would read like this if you forgive the sins of any they have been forgiven them if you withhold forgiveness from any it has been withheld those words are very carefully put in that perfect passive form to indicate that it's not we the Christians who hold the power of forgiveness but it's God he's the one that forgives he's the offended party in every sin so it's only the person who was offended that can forgive the offense so only God can forgive sin so he's the one that forgives but nevertheless we can't deprive the conditional statement of its true force because it does say if you that's us because the disciples are the representatives of the church the foundation of the church if we forgive the sins of any they are forgiven them if we withhold forgiveness from any it is withheld that means as God's representatives and as those who have been indwelt by the spirit of God when we proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ some will believe and accept unto salvation others will reject it unto damnation and because of that are the power that we hold in proclaiming the gospel we become the kind of the sifting force that separates those two people so that if we forgive the sins of any we announce forgiveness of those who believe in Jesus then it is forgiven them

God has forgiven them and when we say that that person has not been forgiven because their refusal to believe it is withheld it has been withheld by the father what an unspeakable privilege a heavy responsibility so let us go and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ liberally widely incessantly so we can pronounce the forgiveness of God over as many people would repent and believe so far we have seen how John saw and believed how Mary saw and believed how the disciples saw and believed but it turns out that there was one disciple who was missing from that group and so now we're going to turn to Thomas verses 24 to 29 how he comes to see and believe but Thomas will not easily be convinced we find out here that he's a skeptic read verses 24 to 25 with me now Thomas one of the twelve called the twin was not with them when Jesus came so the other disciples told him we have seen the Lord but he said to them unless

I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side I will never believe so if you are of a skeptical bent you have a kinder spirit here in Thomas he's a highly logical thinker who relies on his senses and his own rational assessment of situations so we saw this early in John 14 Jesus told his disciples I'm going to the father and you know where I'm going and it was Thomas who interjected and said Lord we do not know where you are going how can we know the way so you could see his character from that so that's the kind of man that Thomas is it doesn't matter to him that the rest of the disciples are saying we've seen the Lord he's like no unless I see him I'm not believing this this is helpful for us because as modern people living in the midst of great scientific advances and progress and reason we sometimes think that

[30 : 58] Christianity it's no longer possible for us to believe because it was for credulous people gullible people back then who didn't have these resources that were so superstitious and ready to believe in miracles and the resurrection of Christ but the story of Thomas reminds us that in every generation there is a share of skeptics they have their own share of skeptics that's what that kind of thinking betrays what C.S. Lewis calls chronological snobbery people in the first century didn't believe in miracles either people in the first century didn't believe that people rose from the dead either that's why this is so remarkable that's why this turns them into believers I've shared this with some of you before but I want to invite you to put on a skeptic's hat with me for a moment think for a moment about the central claim of Christianity that Jesus died for our sins on the cross and rose from the dead as proof of that victory over sin and death now that is a patently falsifiable claim right right author

Michael Patton C. Michael Patton writes in his book now that I'm a Christian that Christianity is the world's most falsifiable religion right to illustrate consider Islam in order to become a Muslim one must trust in a private encounter that Muhammad had with God which is historically unverifiable consider Buddhism and Hinduism whose central tenets are a philosophy rather than a historical event rooted in time and space so there's no objective way to test those either consider every religion you can think of besides Christianity it either begins with one a private dream about God or two a private angelic encounter about God or three a private idea and philosophy about God and then this one person tells everybody else about this private experience and then consider Christianity begins with one a public ministry

Christ was killed publicly it's recorded by Jewish historians and Roman historians two Christ rose from a public tomb publicly and three Christ publicly showed himself to the public and five or four the public told everyone what they saw it's a radically different beginning if you want to start a call that's the last thing you want to do to say that you know what I'm going to die and rise again on the third day because that's not gonna work you're gonna die and not come back from the dead and your religion is dead right before it starts but that's exactly what Jesus did the church grew now the largest religion in the world why because Jesus did rise from the dead and this is the most important and compelling proof among all Jesus signs so read verses so that's why it says verses 26 to 28 eight days later so that would again be the first day of the new week his disciples were inside again and

Thomas was with them although the doors were locked Jesus came and stood among them and said peace be with you when he said to Thomas put your finger here and see my hands and put out your hand and place it in my side do not disbelieve but believe Thomas answered him my Lord and my God it's no easy thing for a faithful Jew to call a man my Lord and my God for thousands of years Jews have believed that there is no God but Yahweh but the reality of the resurrected Lord Jesus overrides his skeptical instincts and theological qualms and he's compelled to conclude by that experience that Jesus really is the son of God the second person of the Trinity and so rightly Thomas says my Lord and my God and what a God to profess for us the

God of all creation became a man a creature so that he can live the fallen life we have lived and to die as the perfect atoning sacrifice for our sins and this drastic gesture of love that Jesus has shown is forever stamped on him because he is incarnate forever he's forever going to be man fully God and fully man and his resurrected body is forever going to have the marks the scars of his crucifixion Edward a Christian minister in England who lived during the first world war writes about this Jesus the poem is entitled Jesus of the scars it reads the Lord Jesus by thy scars we claim thy grace if when the doors are shut thou draw near only reveal those hands that side of thine we know today what wounds are have no fear show us thy scars we know the countersign the other gods were strong but thou was weak they rode but thou didst stumble to a throne but to our wounds only

[36 : 39] God's wounds can speak and not a God has wounds but thou alone our Lord Jesus alone has wounds therefore only he of all the gods can speak to our wounds our suffering our sins our life our Lord Jesus alone became a man so he alone can speak to our humanity we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin so he can empathize with us and therefore Jesus is uniquely worthy of our allegiance and love who do you say this Christ is this is the most important question that you will ever have to answer in your life it's not enough that Christ is someone else's God or Lord is he your

Lord is he your God because Thomas's profession is personal he's my Lord and my God it's easy to be tyrannized by the urgent things that distract us and demand our immediate attention and neglect the things that are of eternal importance things that are most significant do not disbelieve but believe make a decision today this leads us to my final point this morning John bears witness to what he himself along with Mary the disciples and Thomas saw and believed so that we who cannot see might still believe so Jesus says to Thomas in verse 29 have you believed because you have seen me blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed Jesus foresees a time when he will be permanently ascended to the father's right hand and we will no longer be able to see as these disciples did and so thinking of that he says blessed are those who have not seen yet have believed and we belong to this generation so for us faith comes from not seeing but hearing and hearing through the word of

Christ but this doesn't mean that our faith cannot be as strong as that of the first disciple it doesn't mean that our experience of the joy of having relationship with God is any less or inferior to that that is first Peter 1 8 to 9 says though you have not seen him you love him that's the experience that we all know all the Christians know though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory obtaining the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls if you're a believer you know what that means you've experienced those who have not seen and yet have believed over and against those who have seen and believed it's because God is pleased with and honored by our faith our faith in God's word what he has told us shows that we think that God is reliable it expresses our confidence in him as any counselor would say or any relationship expert would say trust is the bedrock of any healthy relationship it's the same in our relationship with

God when we lack confidence in others so that we do not believe what they tell us unless we say we see it for ourselves we betray our lack of esteem in regard for them don't we and that's why Hebrews 11 verse 1 and verse 6 says now faith is the assurance of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen and without faith it is impossible to please God for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him what that means is faith is the modus operandi of the Christian when we act in faith we glorify God by expressing our trust in him and when we act faithlessly we are distrusting God and relying on ourselves all Christian obedience therefore is born of faith we will not conduct ourselves with integrity in every aspect of our lives unless we believe that God is always watching he sees everything we will not forsake our pride and legalism and self righteousness unless we believe that

God has saved us by his grace we will not consider others better than ourselves and look to others interests not just our own unless we believe that this is what Christ did for us and that God sees us and will reward us when we do not believe that God's plan for us is better than our own plans we are doubting God's love for us and failing to love him this is why it pleases God when we believe even when we have not seen it requires more faith so Jesus says blessed blessed are those who have not seen yet believe and when you believe you see John wrote about it this in chapter 11 verse 40 he told Martha if you believe you will see the glory of God so

[42 : 29] Augustine a 4th century Christian theologian wrote about this reality faith is to believe what you do not see the reward of this faith is to see what you believe so John writes in verses 30 to 31 now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name the signs include everything that he did to authenticate his true identity as the Son of God so it includes his miracles but chiefly among them all is his death and resurrection and ascension it's in believing that in believing in Jesus Christ the Son of God that we have life in his name eternal life if you are already a Christian I want to ask you this morning are you taking subsequent steps of faith in your life because all

Christian obedience is born of faith and we cannot please God apart from faith are you choosing the way of faith in God rather than relying on your own works are you trusting in God or are you trusting in yourself that's why often the best path for the Christian is not always the easy path it's not always the path that we clearly see but it's a path that requires the most faith because it pleases him if you are not yet a Christian are you ready to take that first initial step of faith maybe at this point you're wondering how much faith do I need exactly I hope this is a helpful illustration for you January 1st 1914 that's when the very first commercial plane took its passengers and transported them from

St. Petersburg Russia to Tampa Florida imagine two individuals who have the amazing privilege of being first passengers on the plane one of them is very confident in the way this machine was built he's relaxed and calm he's downright giddy at times so he sits and he's confident he enjoys a book whatever he brought and he lands safely in the destination imagine another person he is fearful in fact he considers this a great privilege and honor so he wants to do it and so he does get in the plane but the whole time he's shaking in his boots afraid in fact he squeals out loud when it starts to take off right let me ask you does that person still get to the destination of course because their being transported to the destination was not contingent on the intensity of their faith but on the reliability of that plane so what mattered was that they had enough faith to get on that plane that's what mattered becoming a Christian is similar our salvation does not depend on the intensity of our faith but on the utter dependability and infallibility of our

Savior Jesus Christ so just as safe passage is guaranteed for those two passengers so long as they boarded the plane salvation is guaranteed for you as long as you're willing to entrust your life to Jesus and get on that plane and live your life as a Christian abiding in his word seeking to obey him and all that he calls you to that's what it means to believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and when we do that by believing we will have life in his name Jesus died and rose again so that by believing that he is the son of God we might receive eternal life my prayer this morning it's all of you that none of you will miss that opportunity but that we'll have enjoy be able to enjoy the eternal life he won for us when he resurrected from the dead let's pray together do believe help our unbelief faith itself is a gift from you so we ask for that precious gift for all of us so we may continue to live a life of faith depending on you relying on your work on the cross your salvation that you won for us at no cost to us but at the eternal cost of the death of the son of God oh

Lord capture our imagination our hearts our love there's nothing more beautiful than what you have done for us we love you we want to follow you thank you for this wonderful day we get to celebrate your resurrection in Jesus name we pray amen you next day an one