

The Certainty Of The Unseen As A Prerequisite For Church Planting

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[0 : 00] Hey, great to be with you this morning, Christ Church. I want to talk to you today about the certainty of the unseen as a prerequisite for church planting.

The certainty of the unseen is a prerequisite for planting a church. So today, September 1st, this would mark our four-month birthday as a church.

So we're four months into this thing called Christ Church. And, you know, spring's not usually a good time to start things because summer is when everybody's doing vacations and all that kind of thing.

So it's an interesting time of a year to do this kind of stuff. And it's created its own set of unique circumstances, especially, I think, for my involvement with this church, which I think some of you probably felt in the last month.

There's four main things we set out to do this year that were pretty big and that you usually wouldn't try to do in one year. First one was to start the Workman's Trust, which Adam and Seth and Chris are a part of, trying to raise up more elders and church planters.

[1 : 15] Second was to start Christ Church. Third was to start 24 new missional communities with Bellicose. And then fourth was to get Bellicose in their new building. And that happened last weekend.

So all that stuff is done, which is great. That's a huge burden lifted off. And that's a lot of different things. And today is September 1st.

September is probably one of my favorite months to kind of start kickstarting things, looking forward to things. Fall is such a great time to be on mission. It's a great time to, weather-wise, to get outside with neighbors and friends with football season and the holidays and all these different things.

Very good time to do that. It's when people have settled down, school starting, not doing vacations as much. It's a great time to kickstart things and to really just set things into high gear, so to speak. But I know that four months into this, all the different things, ups and downs, one of the things that's always challenged is our faith. Okay? Maybe some of you came into this church plan really excited.

[2 : 22] Maybe some of you not as much as excited. It's good to have a good mix of that anyways. Okay? Some of you get excited and then others are not excited. And then maybe sometimes there's ebbs and flows where a lot of people aren't excited.

And really what ends up happening is a test of our faith. Right? A test of our faith. James talks about considering it pure joy when we go through many various trials.

And then it says, For the testing of your faith develops perseverance, or ESV says steadfastness. Yes. And perseverance must finish its work so that you might be mature and complete. And so, in order to make a mature church and a mature person, God has to test our faith.

Okay? The testing of your faith develops perseverance. And then perseverance must finish its work so that you might be mature and complete. Everybody wants to be mature and complete. Like, I don't want to be incomplete.

I don't want to be immature. Right? We all like to say that. Of course I don't want to do that. But then when God says that the means by which you get your maturity and completeness is through the testing of your faith through trials, we're kind of like, I don't know if that's what I want.

[3 : 36] I just kind of want the maturity part, the complete part. I don't want the way that it comes. Well, you can't just get what, you know, the end result without the way that God has set up. And God has set up a way for individuals and churches to be mature and complete.

And it is the testing of our faith. Anybody have their faith tested in the last four months? Anybody having their faith tested now?

Of course you are. That's by design. And sometimes we say, God, would you please remove this test of faith? And he's saying, no, no, no. I gave you this test of faith.

This is here so that you would develop perseverance or steadfastness. Do you know that sometimes the reason God tests our faith is because we lack perseverance or steadfastness? And in his loving, gracious kindness, he wants to put it into us. So he says, hey, I'm going to give you various trials. These various trials will test your faith. But the testing of your faith develops perseverance and steadfastness.

[4 : 37] And you need perseverance or steadfastness to finish its work in order to be mature and complete. There is no mature or complete person who has not walked through the complete process of learning to be persevering and steadfast.

One of the hallmarks of an immature person is lack of perseverance. Okay? Do you understand that from the text here? James 1 verse 2. One of the hallmarks of immaturity and incompleteness is a lack of perseverance or steadfastness.

Steadfastness and perseverance are marks of maturity. And the vehicle by which they come is the testing of your faith. So here we are in a church plant. And when you sign up for a church plant, you signed up for your faith to be tested.

You didn't want your faith to be tested? Then why did you sign up for a church plant? I'm sorry. That requires faith. To look around at what you see and then say, well, is what I see everything?

Is what I see what I should be putting my hope in? This brings us to the main text for this message. Hebrews chapter 11 verse 1. Kind of a famous verse that probably some of us have memorized.

[5 : 55] Maybe in different versions. Seth memorized it. Probably the old King James that he was praying with it this morning. I'm going to read it from the ESV and the NIV because I memorized it in the NIV as a young man.

But Hebrews 11 verse 1 in the ESV says, Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. And the NIV says, Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Okay? So in order to have faith, you have to be sure of what you hope for and certain of what you don't see. This means that hope is not faith. But hope is a part of faith.

Okay? A lot of times we confuse hope and faith. I have faith when really what you actually have is just hope. Hope's a good thing. Hope's not a bad thing. But faith is one step further.

Faith is when you're sure of what you hope for. It's one thing. I really hope this happens. I really hope this ends up being this. Or I really hope this promise ends up being true.

[7 : 01] But faith says, I am sure of what I hope for. Let me ask you. Are you sure of what you hope for? A lot of you guys have hopes for this church. Do you just hope for this church?

Are you sure of what you hope for? Faith is being sure of what you hope for. And certain of what you do not see. Okay? I would assume that every single one of us says certain things that we either had hoped would be here in this church at this point.

Or do hope will be in the future. And we don't see them. We haven't seen them. We don't see them. But the question is, In regards to the things you do not see but you hope for, Are you certain of them?

Are you certain of them? When your faith is tested, What is being tested? The certainty of the unseen is being tested. You're being sure. The assurance of what you hope for Is the testing of your faith.

The certainty of what you do not see. Some of us don't see things that we believe God wants to bring about in this church or in our lives. And when we don't see them, The not seeing them itself tests us and causes us to not be certain.

[8 : 20] You ever feel that way? Well, I'm just not seeing it. I keep praying for it. It's not there. You know, we're four months into this. And maybe you guys have been praying for things a lot longer than that in different areas of your life.

And you start to wonder, Is this really something I can be certain of? Well, if you're not certain of what you don't see, Then you don't have faith. Then you don't have faith. Right?

2 Corinthians 4, 16-18 Paul says, So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, Our inner self is being renewed day by day.

For this light momentary affliction Is preparing for us eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. As we look not to the things that are seen, But to the things that are unseen. For things that are unseen are transient, But the things that are, I mean, sorry, Things that are seen are transient or temporary. But the things that are unseen are eternal.
[9 : 18] Okay? What are your eyes fixed on? What are your eyes fixed on? You could come up with a lot of reasons To not have faith.

Based on what you see. You don't need to, I mean, that's easy. You want to do the easy part? Take a look around you. Look around your life. Look around your church. And the devil, Man, he'll just feed it right up to you. He'll give you right on a silver platter. Hey, here's a bunch of reasons Why you should not be certain of what you don't see. You don't see it, And the reason you don't see it Is because it ain't never going to happen. That's what the devil loves to tell us. And you know what? Sometimes we're more sure of it not happening Than we are of it happening. You know what that's called? Unbelief. Unbelief isn't an absence of faith.

Unbelief is faith in the wrong direction. Some of us have great faith, Just not in God. We have great faith. We have great pessimistic powers.

[10 : 17] Okay? But we have a lot of faith in things going bad. We have a lot of faith in things going wrong. We have a lot of faith in things not happening. All based on what we've seen.

Right? Faith is the substance of things not seen. Faith is accessing a realm that you don't see And having more faith in that than what you see.

Who's in for that? I hope all of us are. Because guess what? That is church planting. Building something out of nothing. Building something out of nothing.

This is the realm of what God does. But it's also the realm of church planting. You might say, Well, you're the church planter, bro. Don't put that on us. Uh-uh-uh. Church planters have teams.

You're it. Okay? We do it together. We all have to fight for faith. And the Bible uses that terminology, right? It's the fight of faith. Why did it say fight of faith?

[11 : 16] You know why? Because it's a fight to have faith. A lot of times it's very hard to have faith. You've got to fight for it. Okay? This is your fight. This is our fight.

You up for it? You up to fight for faith? Are you going to go up and down with your circumstances? You're going to base things on what you see? I tell you what. You ain't going to last very long at all. There's a reason why most church plants do not last two years.

The vast majority of church plants do not last two years. You know, when I planted Bellicose in Midtown in 2011, weirdly, and I think sovereignly enough, there was a ton of churches being planted in Kansas City at that time.

And I tell you what, the stats prove true. There's a lot of them that did not make it. There's a lot of them that didn't make it. So that's a stat. That's something you can see. You going to trust in that? Oh man, the odds are stacked against us. Most church plants don't last two years. What if that's us? What if it's not us? What if we believe God? What if we trust God? What if we believe that God is into building his church?

[12 : 24] What if we believe in the only movement that God is behind? Building his church. What if we believe in that? Who's got faith? Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

That's what I said in St. Corinthians 5.7, we don't walk by sight. We walk by faith. We walk by faith, not sight. Let me ask you the question. What have you been walking by lately?

What have you been walking by in your individual life? What have you been walking by in your marriage? What have you been walking by in your single life? What have you been walking by in your church life? What are you walking by?

I don't want you to think about somebody else. Don't look at somebody else next to you. Don't think of the person in this church that you know has a lot of unbelief. I'm talking to you. Where are you at? Are you walking in faith? Listen, Christianity is not for the people who are just figuring it all out in their mind. And I'm not putting down the mind. You love the Lord with all your mind.

[13 : 23] That's a command. But you must have faith. And faith oftentimes flies in the face of your mind because it's not based on what you see.

It's being sure of what you don't see. Your mind says, I have to see it. I have to see it. If I don't see it, I can't believe it. Faith says, I never have to see it to believe it.

And Jesus says, blessed are those who believed even though they haven't seen. Okay? We've got to fight for faith. And listen, if you don't have faith today or you're struggling in faith, I'm not here to condemn you.

But I'm not here to pamper you and tell you that it's okay either. You cannot do a church plant without faith. You can't do Christianity without faith. So that almost goes without saying.

But if we're going to do a church plant, we've got to be in faith. And guess what? You're going to be down in faith sometimes. But that's why we need each other. That's why we've got to fight for each other. There's going to be days where one of you or two of you or three of you are really having a hard time in faith.

[14 : 28] Someone else has got to pull you up. That's why you can't think, oh, it's no big deal if I don't show up at a meeting. It's no big deal if I'm not really a part. It's no big deal if I don't participate. It's no big deal because the people who are really kind of the power brokers here, the people who really have the giftings, they're here.

Don't give me that. That's not how the church works. That's not how God set things up. Everybody has hard days. Everybody struggles in faith. Even people with gifts of faith struggle with faith sometimes.

Okay? We all struggle with unbelief. There's many times where I'm like, oh my gosh, I don't know about this. Why? Because I can't see it.

What do I need in those moments? I need someone with faith to encourage me. You know, when Paul said in the beginning of Romans, he said, I can't wait to get there to impart to you some spiritual gift.

And people a lot of times think, well, that means he was going to lay hands on them and give them an actual spiritual gift. But the next line says that we might be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

[15 : 29] Faith. You know what's encouraging? Someone's faith. You know what's encouraging? When you're down and someone else says, reminds you of the promise, reminds you of God's ways, reminds you of God's character.

Right? Don't you love that when brothers and sisters do that? We have to be that with each other and you cannot count yourself out as if you're not important because you might be the one who is walking in faith when a lot of people around you who are normally people walking in faith are not at the moment and so you're the person to encourage them.

All hands on deck. You used to be a part of a bigger church where you could kind of fly under the radar a little bit. If you didn't have faith, well, maybe there's 20, 30 other people who would.

Not so here. And you might say, well, that's a bummer. I kind of liked it better when there was 20, 30 people who could just encourage me. I don't know about you, but I like it better when God just brings it all up and exposes everything and says, all right, we either got the real deal or we don't have it, but let's have the real deal.

Okay? I got five, five points that I believe God wants to speak to you this morning of areas where we need to have faith, right? Five points. First one, we need faith in God.

[16 : 42] Hebrews 11, 6 says, without faith, it's impossible to please God. Not, well, maybe God won't be pleased or, you know, probably won't be pleased. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

This is not optional. This is not something you can just kind of neglect or think, oh, it's not that big of a deal. No, you cannot please God without faith. Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that he rewards those who seek him? Do you believe that if we keep on seeking, we keep on knocking, we keep on asking, that Jesus will answer us? You better believe he will.

You better believe he will. We seek the God who answers and he is pleased when we come to him, expecting, believing, even, do I go as far as to say demanding that he answer?

Holding him to his promises? God, you said, God, you said, God, you said. I think he loves that. I think that ravishes his heart.

[17 : 44] Why do you think he said to the centurion, I have not seen, he says he was astonished at his faith. I would love for Jesus to be astonished with Christ's church faith. my theological mind has no grid for even how that works, how God could even be astonished, but it said Jesus was astonished.

I would hope that he would look at our faith and say, look at this little church over here in Raytown, their beautiful little carpet squares. These guys, they believe God.

They believe God. And how do you believe God? Well, one of the ways you don't believe God is when you give more credence to what's against us.

Yeah, but this is against us. But we have this dynamic and this dynamic and this thing isn't right and this should be better and this thing keeps us from doing this and this and this and this. And then Romans 8:31 says, if God is for us, who can be against us?

But we like to talk about all the things that are against us, don't we? You want to have faith? Stop exalting so much what is against us and exalt the one who is for us. You know what your greatest place of victory and faith is?

[18:49] What we were just doing before, worshiping the Lord. And I'm just, not just talking about in song, well that's a huge part. And it's not just on a Sunday morning, it's every, it's all days. But it is getting into a place of belief in who God is and worshiping him.

Because sometimes we actually, we have this quasi-subtle, we would never call it this, but it's almost an idolatrous worship of what's against us. We give so much credence to it, we exalt it so highly that it causes us to be depressed or to not have faith.

You ever do that? You ever do that? Where you, you give so much, dare I say even worship, where you just ascribe so much greatness to the obstacles. Oh, these obstacles are so great.

Great are thy obstacles. Right? Great are thy obstacles. You know? And we just, we give them so much credence, but where is the great is thy faithfulness?

We forget that song in those moments. Who's singing great is thy faithfulness then? Who's trusting? No. I don't care how great my obstacles are. God is greater. God is greater.

[19:57] I'm going to believe that. And the more you worship God and get into that place of worship and say, God, if you're for me, who could be against me? That's a rhetorical question. Nobody. Who could possibly be against you?

What could possibly be against you if you have faith in God? God is for us. Some of us need to notify our face that God is for us.

Our faces sometimes don't look like God is for us. Our prayers sometimes don't sound like God is for us. Our complaints don't sound like God is for us. Do we believe God's for us?

Man, whatever you believe about God is for us, guess what? It's not, you're off. You're off. You're falling short in some way. He's more for whatever, whatever you can think of how for you he is, he's more than that.

He's more for you than you could ever think he's for you. So if you get to that point where you think, man, I really believe God's for you, guess what? He's more for you. He is. That's the kind of stuff we have to believe and that's the kind of culture that Christ Church needs.

[21:08] And don't wait for me to do it and don't wait for the person sitting next to you to do it. You get into a place of faith. Not because you pull yourself up by your own bootstraps, not because you're some great Christian who has it all together, no, because you have a great and faithful God and he's not just, he's your God.

He's for you. So you get into a place of faith. You cry out to him and say, God, forgive me. I believe, but help me in my unbelief. I really do believe, but help me in my unbelief.

Right? That's the kind of prayer we have to pray. And when we pray, James 5:16 says, the prayer of a righteous man is what? It's powerful and it's effective.

The old King James says, does it availeth much? Right? Right? It avails much. It's powerful. It's effective. Do you believe that? When you're faced with the lack, when you're faced with not seeing things, where do you go?

Do you call up someone in the church or kind of elbow them and say, hey, what do you think about this? Is that your first place you go? Or are you going to the throne? You go into the King. You go into the place where there is power.

[22:18] The prayer of a righteous man availeth much. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and it's effective. It's effective. You know what's ineffective? Complaining, exalting our circumstances and problems.

You know what's effective? Prayer. Prayer is effective. How's our prayer life? Are we taking, what a privilege it is to carry everything to God in prayer.

Remember that old, that old hymn? Oh, what joy we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer, right?

Because we don't carry everything to God in prayer. God is for us. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Are we taking advantage of that? We need faith in God. Number two, we need faith in who God has made us.

Okay? Ephesians 4, 15 to 16. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped.

[23 : 21] When each part is working properly, it makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Okay? When each part is working properly, it makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

We want to see this church grow. Healthy churches, healthy things grow. Okay? How does the church grow? How does the church grow when each part is working properly?

Some of us don't have faith in the part of the body that we are. Some of us are underestimating or selling short that which God has created in you to be used for his body to build it up.

Maybe we say, well, I don't have that part, so I'm not important. You know, it's literally 1 Corinthians 12 kind of language, right? Well, I don't have that gift, so that must not be important. Each part is required and necessary for the building up the body, and when we lose faith in our part that God has given us to play, a God-given part, guess what happens?

The church isn't built up. The church isn't strengthened. You each have a very important part. Now, some of us are more gifted than others. Some of us have different degrees of gifting, but there is no less importance on any of our gifts for the building up of the body.

[24 : 34] The question is, do you believe that? Are you lacking faith in God, the God-given gift that you are to the body? Some of us have maybe wavered in that, not really trusting in that.

1 Corinthians 12, verse 7 says, To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Your gift, your part, is for the common good. And when we neglect to use it, or we don't believe that it is, we neglect the common good.

Number three, we need faith in God's leadership. Ephesians 4, 11-14, he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, to we all attain to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

Okay? So God gives gifts to the church. He ascended and he gave gifts to men. There's people who are gifts to the church to equip the saints, not to do all the ministry, not to hog the ministry, but to equip the saints for ministry.

Okay? So the body is built up. Do we have faith in God's gifts that he's given to the body? Do we have faith in apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists? That these gifts are given to the church to build up the church?

[26 : 09] Do we have faith in the unique abilities of each one? That when those are working correctly, we attain unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.

Mature manhood, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so we're no longer children. Again, this comes back to that maturity thing. I know when we even started Christ Church, we talked a lot about maturity and having maturity as a core value of our church.

We want to be mature. Part of the way that the church is mature is when it responds rightly and connects rightly and has faith in the gifts that God has given to the church to build it up and to equip it.

And apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers are five of those gifts that he has given to do that. But the devil would love to shake our faith in that. Shake our faith in God's leadership.

And listen, I know that some of the ways I lead this church, you're not familiar with, some of you.

[27 : 11] Some of you are very familiar with it, some of you aren't. Some of the ways I lead in this church, you're uncomfortable with. Totally get that. Some of the ways I lead this church, you maybe question, say, I don't know about this.

I don't know if this is the best. I don't know if what he's doing is the best. I don't know if the amount of time he's spending is the best. Right? We have conversations about this kind of stuff. And I

welcome all those conversations.

Right? I understand. And here's another thing I understand. I'm not a perfect leader. I make mistakes. I screw up. And so some things might be harder to follow, but some things are harder to follow because you've never seen them before.

And when you haven't seen things before, what does it require? Faith. Faith requires faith. And so part of what I'm trying to lead us into is I am going to, and already have, because I hear people's feedback, I am leading people into things that you've never seen before.

And I know that that's difficult. I know that's hard. I don't like being led into things that I've never seen before. Okay? I get that. And I hope I'm compassionate on that.

[28 : 22] And if I'm not, please confront me on that. Okay? But what I'm asking you is for faith in that. I'm asking you to trust that God has given certain gifts to the body to build in a certain way so that the church is what he wants it to be.

One of those gifts is an apostolic gifting. And so there's sometimes I'm going to do things as a leader. You're going to think, I don't know about that, or I've never seen that before, or that's really hard to follow.

And I always want to talk about that. If you want to talk about it, always do. But it's going to require faith. It's going to require faith.

And one of the ways that we can do that is Hebrews 13 verse 7 says, Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you, consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Okay?

So part of what I'm asking you is two things. Consider the outcome of the way of life that there's already track record of. Okay? Many of you are a part of Bellicose. You can see Bellicose.

[29 : 21] Some of you have known Gene and I and our family for a while. There's a lot of things that we could do better. There's a lot of ways that we could lead better. But there is a way of life that you can look at and say, okay, look at the fruit.

And if I don't like it, well, that's fine. That's fine. But there is, we should examine the outcome of people's way of life. And then what should we do? Imitate their faith. Imitate faith.

I have a lot of faith that God wants to do great things in this church. Even though my eyes don't see it right in front of me right now. I see parts of it. What I can see is in the spirit.

One of my favorite stories about Walt Disney is, you know, Walt Disney had this, I don't know if you know much about Walt Disney, but he had this grand vision for Disney World, right? In Orlando, it's sprawling, incredible acreage.

He had all these great plans for it. And he died before it was built. And after it was built, one of the guys who was in charge of Disneyland after the death of Walt Disney said to one of the other guys, who was these upper leadership guys, they were kind of looking over this whole sprawl of acreage of all the things that Disney World had become and said, man, wouldn't it have been great if Walt could have seen this?

[30 : 40] Wouldn't it have been great if Walt could have seen this? And the guy looked at him and said, if Walt didn't see this, it would have never existed. But he was speaking of his vision.

He was speaking of his seeing things. There are people that God has given in the body of Christ. They see things and they see certain things that other people don't see and they see them in faith. And if you don't see them, that's okay.

If you're not gifted that way, that is okay. But God says then imitate their faith. Imitate their faith. Look at the faith they have and imitate it. Say, all right, I'm going for this.

We're going to believe God for this. I'm going to take this journey together. And so part of what I'm saying is, hey, some of it might be hard, but I'm asking you, imitate the faith that you see and let's believe God together for that, right?

Number four, faith in God's church. Faith in God's church. I need faith in God's church. I think so. Why? Because sometimes you might think, is this church thing really going to, you know, you sit in a room like this sometimes.

[31 : 50] I think this all the time. I don't care how big the room is. Last week, sitting in Bellicose, the first service in the new building. And I know some of you kind of wish you might have been able to be there because you were a part of that in the past.

First of all, I'll say the grass is always greener. There's always something to overwhelm you when you're sitting in those services. I get overwhelmed sometimes at Bellicose. I get overwhelmed

sometimes here.

But I've always hit with the foolishness of the church every time I'm sitting in a church service. Whether it's Bellicose or Christ Church or some other church. By the world standard, the church is so foolish.

It doesn't make any sense. It doesn't have any sense to make impact. How would a bunch of broken people who have sometimes who have nothing in common other than Christ, from different socioeconomic backgrounds, different experiences, different family backgrounds, different ages, different life experiences, different jobs, different personalities.

How does those people come together and do anything worthwhile that makes any impact in the world by singing songs in a building to a God they can't see, listening to guys preach, praying together in homes and in buildings all across the world?

[33 : 06] This happens all the time. You know how foolish that is by the world's eyes to say, what are you guys doing? Why would you do that? Is this ever going to amount to anything? Are we ever going to see any impact?

And yet Jesus said, said it to Peter. He said, on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The church, listen to me, the church that God is building shall not be prevailed against.

Do you hear me? The church that God is building shall not be prevailed against. Do you believe that? Sometimes, you know, we look at our church and we think, I can think of a lot of reasons why this is going to be prevailed against.

I think that so many times sometimes when I'm looking at all the different dynamics of church life. And yet I just always remember Matthew 16, 18.

He said, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The gates of hell look pretty formidable. Hell sometimes looks very formidable. It shall not prevail. What do you believe?

[34 : 13] Do you believe that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church? Are you having your doubts? If you're having your doubts, confess them.

But get back into a place of faith and believe that we are actually a part of co-laboring with Christ to build the one thing on earth that is invincible. The gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

It will advance into hell and depopulate it. Right? Gates, you know, when you're walking on a sidewalk, a gate doesn't jump up and attack you. The gate is not an offensive thing.

It's a defensive thing. We are supposed to literally go through the gates of hell and plunder souls. Hating even the clothing corrupted by sinful flesh, it says in Jude.

Right? Do you believe in that? In that power that is behind God's church? His holy bride? What a powerful entity.

[35 : 12] That's why church isn't optional. That's why you can't say, well, the church is just people and it's just, you know, it's not, you know, this kind of organized stuff. That is the goofiest thing in the world if you read the New Testament.

Like, I don't know how you could ever read the New Testament and believe that. Clearly they met often, regularly. Clearly they had specific things they did as a church. Even to the point of determining what widows were supported.

And it's specific elders that led the church and it's specific things that they were supposed to do. The church is not some willy-nilly, just people here and there doing good things for Jesus, loving Jesus in their own way, doing what they want, how they want, the way they want.

The church is a group of people united in a specific way. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Do you believe that? Are you rallying each other to believe that? Say, hey, what a privilege that we get to be a part of seeing the infant stages of one of the most powerful things on the planet.

Like, do you believe that when you think about that? I want you to look around right now. Just look around. Look at all these people. Take a look around. And you probably could think of a lot of things you don't see yet that you'd love to see.

[36 : 24] And this people, this thing called Christ Church. Is that true? Is that fair? There's a lot of things you'd like to see that aren't here yet. There's a lot of empty chairs that you'd like to see filled with lost souls come to Christ, right?

There's a lot of growth you'd like to see, a lot of great things you'd like to see. It's not here yet. What are you going to fix your eyes on? What you don't see or what you see? Faith is being sure of what

you hope for and certain of what you don't see.

If you're not seeing his church prevailing against the gates of hell, you're not seeing his kingdom advancing, what are you going to trust in? What you see with your eyes or what you trust in your heart?

And last one, number five, faith in God's gospel. Faith in God's gospel. Now I know Matthew 7 says that the path is wide that leads to destruction, right?

And then it says that the gate is, or the path is narrow that leads to life. And it says few find it. So we know that not a lot of people are going to get saved ratio-wise in the whole world.

[37 : 32] It's few that find it. But there are people that find it. And guess who the, and guess what is the thing that causes them to find it?

This thing that Jesus called the gospel, the good news. It's that verse that Martin Luther got so excited about, right? Romans chapter one, verse 16.

He says, I'm not, Paul said, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. Why is he not ashamed? For it is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe. Now I love that we pray for power. It's good to pray for power.

But sometimes we forget that even if we don't pray for power, if you have the gospel, you already have power. When you share the gospel, so when you're preaching the gospel, so do you ever doubt sometimes it's powerful?

I do. Do we sometimes have more faith in it not working than it working? But the Bible says the gospel is the power of God. For what? For the salvation of all who believe.

[38 : 30] The gospel is power. But what if you present it in an unpowerful way? So what? It doesn't say that the presentation of the gospel in the right, perfect, powerful way by a charismatic personality who knows everything about it is powerful.

It says the gospel is powerful. Some of us need a reminder of that this morning. I appreciate the faithfulness of this church to preach the gospel. It's awesome.

I love it. Keep doing it. Don't ever get tired of it. Don't ever stop. Don't ever stop coming up with new ways to preach the gospel, to find new people to preach the gospel, to find new people and ways to get lost people in front of you to hear the gospel.

Don't ever, ever, ever, ever, ever stop that. But please, for Christ's sake, believe that it is power.

Remember, that every time you open your mouth in your frail and weak ways and in the ways you're fumbling over your words and you think, oh, I could have done that way better or why did I say it that way or I felt like I thought it in my head way better than it came out of my mouth.

You ever feel that way? I felt that way so many times. But to believe that the reason I'm not ashamed is because the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of those who believe.

[39 : 44] that you hold within your hands every time you're in front of them and they're like, I have power. I have the gospel. I have the good news of the kingdom of God and I can give it to them.

But what if I don't do it right? What if I don't do it as good as so-and-so does it? Just read the text. Stop making all these weird excuses to not believe. It is the power of God.

God has used the worst presentations of the gospel ever to save people. That's not saying you don't need to present it right. Okay? Do your best to do that.

But God is faithful even when we are faithless. God is faithful even in our weak attempts. We need to believe that people are going to get saved as a result of this church.

Do you hear me? We need to talk like that. And when we don't believe, let's confess it. Let's not be ashamed to confess, hey, you know what? I'm having a hard time believing for souls right now.

[40 : 43] I'm having a hard time people are going to get saved at Christ's church. We're four months in and I'm thinking, how is this going to work? Hopefully a brother or sister can say to you, hey man, substance, things hoped for, being sure of what you do not see.

You don't see it now. You don't see it now. This is faith. Faith is being sure that souls will be here. Faith is being sure that souls will be here. I don't know about you, but that's the kind of stuff that gets me excited.

Some of you might think, oh man, it would have been exciting to be in that new building with all those people at Bellicose last week. You know what I think is exciting? Being in this little building with way less people and then seeing the people who aren't here in my mind's eyes through faith and believing that they're coming.

And knowing that you guys are believing with me too. and that these are my brothers and sisters who are co-laboring with me to see souls come into the kingdom. Because what else are you going to live for?

Are you going to live for a paycheck and a weekend? Are you going to live for a vacation and some new experience? Are you going to live for pleasure and entertainment? Are you going to live for all those things?

[41 : 53] Those things are all fun. But man, they are such low-level reasons to exist. You were made for so much more. That is never going to satisfy you.

Oh, it feels good for a little while. It'll keep you going. It'll lull you to sleep is what it'll do. But you know what awakens you? Every time you share the gospel with a lost person you think, this could be the time.

This person could go from darkness to light. This person could go from heading to hell to heading to life eternal with Jesus Christ and all the saints. And living in a new heaven and a new earth.

Like every time I open my mouth to preach the gospel that's possible. And you know why it's possible? Because a church exists to send people out to do it. And that church right now is this church right here, Christ Church.

So I'm asking you, I'm commanding you, I'm exhorting you, have faith. Have faith, beloved. I know it's not easy. I know some days it's harder than others.

[42 : 54] I get it. I struggle with it many times. But think of all the things you don't see right now and let's fix our eyes on the unseen. You don't see converts?

Can you just even envision right now as we close this message, I want you to just to think and believe. God, there are souls out there that are going to get saved in this church. Do you believe that? That God is already drawing.

God's already drawing them right now. We don't know who they are. We don't know where they are. We don't know those men and women of peace are going to put us in contact with them. They're out there somewhere. God's drawing them as we speak.

You don't see them. I don't see them. I don't know who they are. I don't know their names. But are we certain of what we do not see? Are you certain of the souls that are coming into the kingdom through this church even though you don't see them?

I know some of you are hoping for some young people to become a part of this church and really want to see some young people to be able to pour into. Okay? But you don't see them.

[43 : 52] You don't see them. Are you going to be certain of what you don't see? Believe God? I know some of you are hoping for friends for your kids and some of you young cats are hoping for friends your age.

Right, guys? You know what we used to do when we started Battle Coast? Every single night before we went to bed I told our kids I remember one night I think our kids were shedding a couple tears because they were saying man, we wish there were more kids our age at Battle Coast.

And so I said to Gina and I said to the kids okay, every night we're going to pray before we go to bed we're going to pray for friends for you guys your age in this church. Because when we started there was no there was no kids our kids age.

And we just said every night we just started praying it. And there was no you know you say like how are we going to get kids their age? I had no clue. Like if the kids would ask me Dad, how's this going to happen?

I don't know but I believe it's going to kids. Somehow you're not going to be lonely we're not going to be lonely we're all going to have people. But when we started we were lonely and our kids were lonely.

[44 : 59] And all we had was the unseen. We just had the unseen and a God who brings the unseen into the seen realm through prayer. And so we prayed every single we would pray most nights probably not every single night we prayed most nights God give us those friends our kids age.

And then what happened? Did God answer that prayer? He answered that prayer. Okay you young kids who are praying for kids your age keep praying don't give up.

You hear me? You keep praying for that. God wants to answer that. You know it would be really awesome if the answer didn't give you some lost kids who are your age who he wants to save. We can believe for that.

He does that. He has done that. Some of us are wishing we had a little bit more fellowship or a little more familial atmosphere in this church. A little bit maybe some closer friendships.

Maybe some of us left some closer friendships in the church we were at before and now are here and we don't have as close of friendships and we don't see how it could be possible here. You ever think that?

[46 : 03] It's not seen. So what are you going to do? You're going to believe for what's unseen? You're going to be certain that even though I don't see it it's going to come because God wants it.

It's God's will for us to have close friendships and fellowship in a familial atmosphere. But it doesn't happen overnight either. And so some of the stuff we're not seeing you're thinking oh how's this going to happen? I don't have answers to you in the specifics but I do have an answer in the way. It's through God and through faith in Him. Being certain of what you don't see. Some of us are looking and lastly to close some of us are looking at some of the methods that we're taking to do this church to plant this church how we do partnership how we do church planting and sometimes some of the methods and the results are unseen.

And so we have to say okay am I going to walk in faith? Am I going to believe in the things I don't see right now and be certain of them? Am I going to trust God?

Am I going to believe God? We all have to do this. Faith is being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see. Where's your faith this morning?

[47 : 13] Where's your faith this morning? Let's stand. I want to pray together. Can you guys stand? Let's stand.