

The Word of Life

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[0:00] God which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.

Amen. 1 John, that can be found in your pew Bible on page 1210.

I encourage you to, if you don't have your own Bible, to pick one up in your pew and open along on page 1210 so you can follow along. Last week we talked about, we had an overview of this book, and we said that this book was written for a church that was besieged.

Not necessarily by persecution from the outside, but by heresy and heterodoxy and falsehood from inside, or at least among those who claim to be Christians.

Now, at its most basic, Christianity is the faith tradition that focuses on the figure of Jesus Christ.

[1:37] In this context, faith refers both to the believer's act of trust and to the content of their faith. I just quoted for you the Encyclopedia Britannica.

And I actually think they did a good job of describing what Christianity is. At least I guess it was basic. I think it's a true and accurate, even if not exhaustive, definition of what Christianity is.

It is a faith tradition that focuses on the figure of Jesus Christ. Now, I wonder how many today would do as well as the Encyclopedia Britannica in answering that question.

What is Christianity? We, I mean even faithful Christians, have been conditioned often to think of our Christian faith in subjective terms.

We have grown accustomed to tying our faith to our feelings. Now, what I appreciate about the definition that was given in the Encyclopedia is that the answer is wonderfully objective.

[2:49] I often question my Christian faith by my feelings. I don't think I'm the only one. Oftentimes you're having a difficult week. You're not reading your Bible.

You are maybe struggling with a particular sin. You're struggling with, you know, some certain unchristian emotions in your heart. And that can sometimes send us an downward spiral.

Where am I in relation to Jesus Christ? Am I truly a believer or not? Now, feelings, those feelings are not altogether bad.

I think actually as we go through this first letter of John, John will give us some guidelines to be able to test. Rather than really to show and to confirm our faith.

And some of those tests are a moral test. Right? Are you actually loving the brothers? Do you believe? Are questions of theological tests? Do you believe what you proclaim?

[3:51] They're not altogether bad. But we ought not to condition or rest our faith purely on our feelings.

We see here John writing to a church, to Christians who were full of doubts. Not unlike us. And full of uncertainties.

John is saying to us and to them that our feelings and faith are not intrinsically tied to one another. John says to them and to us that the reliable claim about the word of life, Jesus Christ, is what brings true fellowship and joy.

So, this proclamation is grounded in the apostolic witness. And it results in fellowship with the triune God.

[4:49] So, let's look. Let's look in the first verses at the proclamation that John makes. That which was from the beginning. We have heard him.

We have seen him with our eyes. We have looked upon him. We have touched him with our hands. That which was from the beginning. There's echoes of John, the gospel of John.

John 1, 1 here. In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was God. Do you see the echoes? Even Genesis 1.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. So, as we look back at John 1 and Genesis 1. We think of the eternal God.

Who has no beginning and who has no end. And we think of him as one God in three persons. But I want us to see here in this opening verses of this letter.

[5:52] In this opening epilogue in 1 John. The beginning that John has in view is not the eternity past. The beginning that he has in view is the incarnation of the Lord Jesus.

John wants us to know that this word of life. Who was before time. Who was before time and space. Through whom all things were made. Who is the second person of the Trinity. This word of life took on flesh. Having a true body and a reasonable soul.

These are the essential components of what it means to be a true human being. This person of the Trinity took on flesh. He was nine months in the womb of his mother.

The Blessed Virgin Mary. This word of life was an objective reality. An historical fact. That's what John is trying to communicate to us.

[7:00] And he says to the churches that he writes to. He says it to us as well this morning. We have heard him. We have seen him with our own eyes.

We have looked upon him. We have touched him. With our own hands. This is a testimony. This is a first person account.

Do you see it there? John is saying to us. I heard him with my own ears. I saw him with my very own eyes. I touched him with my very own hands. And one cannot help but think that John has in mind.

As he says this. Is three years of intimate friendship with Jesus. Going in and out as a disciple. In fact as one of the three inner circles with Jesus.

So Jesus. John has in mind those three years. And John attests to that. But I think even more powerfully. As John is saying this. He has in mind.

[8:05] The event after the crucifixion. And the burial. The resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was an eyewitness after all. John was.

To the death of Christ. To his burial. And to his resurrection. But I think in a lot of ways. John as he says this. He's not thinking of. Before the crucifixion Jesus.

He's thinking of the risen Lord himself. And he still says. We have heard him. We have seen him with our eyes. We have looked upon him. We have touched him. He has in mind Luke 24.

When Jesus appeared to the disciples. Remember. When they were in the room hiding. He appears to them. And he said to them. Look at my hands and my feet. Look. This is I myself.

Jesus says to them. Touch me and see. Jesus says. Because a ghost does not have flesh and bones. As you can see that I have. This is the risen Lord.

[9:03] Before the apostles. And John was there. In the room. And he got to see it a second time. When Jesus appeared to Thomas. Remember Thomas was not in the room.

And Jesus repeated the same thing to Thomas. Touch. See. Look. And believe. There's the risen Lord.

Standing before them. John is saying. I was there. I saw it. I heard it. I touched him. This testimony. Is concerning. The word of life. The word of life. It seems in the beginning. That you're not quite sure. What he's talking about.

Is it. Is it a person. Is it a thing. But he says in verse 2. This life was made manifest. We have seen it. We. Testify.

[9:58] And proclaim it to you. The technical word. For testify here. Means witness. We have born witness. Is what John is saying.

And that word is often used. In the New Testament. To describe. An original eyewitness. Someone who saw it. Was there. In real time. In space. This.

This. This. This. This. Is the. Testimony of the apostles. They were eyewitnesses. Remember that we said last week. That. At this time. That John is writing the letter.

He is likely. The only living apostle left. And he is saying. To the churches. I. Was. There. So John provides.

To them. John provides. In these pages. John provides. The historical testimony. To this life. That was made manifest. He is saying.

[10:55] To them. This person. That you worship. This Jesus. That you know. That you worship. And that you. Have. Have. Have. Have. Have. Have. Bowed down to.

And promised fealty to. Is not just some nebulous. Imaginary thing. He is real flesh and blood. Real flesh and blood. Blood person.

Now. You might ask. Why was this testimony needed? For the churches. Why was. Why did John have to start here? Where he started? John.

I think this. Did so. To give confidence. To his. To his immediate readers. And we might ask. How then. Can this also reassure us. And our faith.

I think John was. You have to remember. That John was writing. To these faithful Christians. They are faithful Christians. But they are in the midst of doubt. And uncertainty. There were some among them.

[11 : 51] Who have started. To teach. And preach. And believe. In aberrant. Things. But one of the things. That perhaps. They were believing in. Is that Jesus. Was not truly human.

It's. Part of the Greek. Hellenistic. Aversion. To. Things that are. Material. Matter. Physical. And so. It's that kind of. Later on.

There's a thing that. That. Heresy. That develops. That's called. Gnosticism. But these are probably. Like. Early. Early. Symbols of it. That has gone on. In the church here.

These people believe. That Jesus. Was not truly human. They probably. They were teaching. Not only. Were they doing that. They have separated themselves. From the faithful. And when they were teaching.

This aberrant theology. Aberrant truth. Aberrant falsehood. To the church. And so. John comes. And starts. By saying. I. Was an eyewitness.

[12 : 48] I saw. The truly human Jesus. He was truly man. And truly God. These Christians.

Were faced with people. Who have hollowed out. The truth. Of the Christian faith. I think it's just like today. It's not unlike today. There are many buildings.

In our modern cities. And villages. And towns. Which claim. The name of Jesus Christ. But they no longer. Old. To the truth.

About Jesus Christ. Such churches. Have denied. That he is. Indeed. Lord. They might deny. His virgin birth. For example. They might even deny. The resurrection. There are such churches. They exist. Beware. Don't go into them. Some will deny.

[13 : 45] That there is no fall. No sin really. No such thing. As original sin. They deny the virgin birth. They deny the atonement. How could. How could. God die.

How could. The father. Send his son. To die. For our sin. They deny that. They deny the resurrection. They deny the ascension. They don't believe in a real heaven.

And a real hell. Their such places exist. They've hollowed out the truth of the Christian faith. Jesus to these such people is just a vehicle to a deeper enlightenment.

To a deeper transcendent humanity. Jesus is just a guru to a higher living there's no difference to these such people between Jesus and the Buddha it's just a vehicle for them rather than the savior of the world there are such people among us so we can identify with how these Christians might be feeling and some of such people claim to be actually in fellowship with God they claim to have a deeper truth and a deeper knowledge of God but John rejects such attempts any attempts to reduce Jesus to a mere avatar of human aspirations any attempt to reduce Jesus to just a vehicle to your own sort of spiritual nirvana is a lie and falsehood

John here tells us that we ought to reject it he said to us Jesus is the word of life life the very life that you need to be found in him it's Achenberg to his gospel in John chapter 1 verse 4 in him was life and the life was the light of all people this Jesus is the author of life he is life in himself it is through him alone that human beings can have eternal life John also says in his gospel in chapter 17 that the Jesus says this about John says this about Jesus rather the father gave him authority over all people so that he that is Jesus may give eternal life to everyone the father has given him this is what John is talking about this is the word of life that we've seen he's a person flesh and blood have you found him do you know the game find and be found anyone know that game find and be found you don't

[16 : 37] I think it's because you you often play there as old you play the I didn't seek game right you know I didn't seek but have you played I didn't seek with a three year old or younger it's a fascinating game if you have if you have grandkids or children of that age you play I didn't seek with them and they hide right in front of you and and they they are they are hiding and then they you know or they just right in front of you they walk in hiding somewhere and then they and then you're looking for them and even before you find them they jump up and they say you found me it's

because they're not playing I didn't seek at that age they're playing find and be found this is what John is saying to us this Jesus is meant to be found it's not hiding it's not hidden it's not someone that you'd find through some sort of secret knowledge that some people were claiming in the church around just this time

John's time we have the secret knowledge we have the deeper secret deeper secret knowledge you should come to us we have the way John says to them no he is plain simple objective truth about Jesus is plain to see God the father wants his son to be found there is no hide and seek in the Christian faith God's truth is plain plainly given to us to be seen so we ought it seems to me like the apostle John is like a three year old child proclaiming to us this is not a hide and seek game this is a find find and be found game have you found him do you know this Jesus he says it there we are writing he's entered in verse 4 that we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete the joy the apostolic joy is that we ourselves the churches that he's writing to the Christian church on which that that stands on the apostolic word will know this Jesus and find him then their joy will be complete it is this life that is being proclaimed by

John the apostle and John tells us he's proclaiming it his intent is that his joy may be complete our joy rather it means the apostles and he says that so that we that's why we proclaim to you verse 3 we proclaim actually if you look at these verses it isn't until verse 3 that we see a verb it's there in the Greek and I think rightfully it's there in the English actually if you're reading the English English version it's just a bunch of participles that which we have due to us from the beginning which we've heard which we've seen with our eyes which we've looked upon the active verb then is in verse all the way in verse 3 of this sentence we proclaim that which we've seen which you have touched which you have seen with our eyes which you've heard with our ears we proclaim to you we proclaim it to you he says for what purpose towards what end so that you may have fellowship with us and our fellowship is with the Father and with and with and through his Son

Jesus Christ I want us to look briefly in this in this word the pronouns that are being given here there's a lot of we we we by in John's writing and he's saying we proclaim to you we we have heard we have we've seen we've looked upon and then he says we proclaim it to you so there's the we and us there pronouns it's the first person plural and then you didn't think you were going to go to grammar school this morning and then he's saying the object of his proclamation is to you not just you singular it is you second person plural you all we proclaim it to you all and it's not just limited by time and space by the way he is writing to an immediate church but he's saying it to us here as well under the banner of Christ we proclaim it to you all we here notice that the we here is not all Christians it has to be a select group of people because we've already known we've already seen that it is only how many people have seen Jesus anyone here seen him and touched him no you've not seen him but yet you believe based on the word and the proclamation of the apostles what John is saying here is that we the we there is the apostles upon which the church stands they are the foundation of the church we looked at that when we were in Ephesians and John is saying we've proclaimed this to you this truth about this

Jesus we proclaim the truth about him so that you may have fellowship and you would think that he would say at this so you may have fellowship with God the father and with his son Jesus Christ no he doesn't go there he says so that you may have fellowship with us us there is the apostles again you may have fellowship with us and then he goes on our fellowship was with the father and with and through his son Jesus Christ so the end goal is that you will have fellowship with God the father the son and the holy spirit but you can only have fellowship with God the father the son and the holy spirit if you are having through the preaching and the proclamation and the testimony and the witness of the apostles the way we access this life who is Jesus Christ is through the apostolic testimony it is through the apostolic witness it is on the basis of their authoritative message and truth about

[23:08] Jesus that we have fellowship with God that is a wonderfully clear and important thing to hold on to I want you to notice the objective nature of this proclamation this is the test of faith that John has provided us he says to us if you want to have fellowship true fellowship with God you must have fellowship with us why because Christ himself has appointed the apostles and promised that he will lead them in all truth for the sake of the church and it is their word upon which the church stands what is the objective truth and the word of the apostles it is the word inscripturated in the new testament that we have that is the basis of our fellowship and unity in the church many will come to you and tell you there are so many bases of unity in church there are bases I mean there

are but the primary the primary basis upon which you have fellowship with God it's based on the apostolic message do you believe in

God's work proclaimed in the pages of scripture do you believe that he is born of women of the virgin mary do you believe that he died for your sins and on the third day he rose again do you believe that he is life in himself do you believe that only through him can you have eternal life the test of faith isn't some mystical experience that's not what John provides here for us mystical experiences are sometimes God's gift to his children to Christians we've heard you must have heard of people in the Middle East that have no access to the gospel Jesus appears to them that is wonderful that's God's grace to do that but that is not the test of true faith if you're looking and many people you probably have heard this from many people yeah you know

I'm just waiting for God to show himself to me to reveal himself to me then I'll believe well God has revealed himself to you it is there in the pages of all the scripture it is an objective truth you want to find Jesus look in the apostolic message so the normative means of knowing Jesus of coming to Jesus it's in the word of God given to us this is the objective measure this is why John offers it to these Christians he tells them you know him you know him you know him because he's proclaiming to you and you believe in him and he's saying to them no matter what you're feeling you might be feeling especially on top of the world because you feel like you do have intimate fellowship with God you're spending time in daily prayer in the daily office you're spending time in the word or maybe you are having a hard time and you feel like

God is at a distance maybe you're struggling with one thing or the other and you feel like how could God love me am I even in fellowship with God this is a test that John the apostle offers us brothers and sisters it is an objective truth it's not an inward it's not saying go search inside yourself to find he says look to Jesus we proclaim him to you do you believe him do you trust his work for you if you do then you are in the faith you are your sons and daughters of Christ you are fellowship along with apostles with God the father and with the son Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit so no matter what you're feeling this is the proclamation so this is a word of confirmation and confidence for you we're going to end here in verse 4 we'll begin in verse 5 next week but I want to encourage us this morning wherever you may be this is

Christ offered to you look to him believe in him and if you do this is the word of assurance you have fellowship along with the apostles with God the father and you have fellowship with his son Jesus Christ you have fellowship with the Holy Spirit there is no more precious truth that we can hold on to brothers and sisters in Christ than the reality and the trust and the faith and the belief and the confidence that we have fellowship with the triune God and if you do then stop looking around to idols stop looking at the offerings of the world that cannot satisfy little children keep yourselves from idols let us pray