

Kierkegaard: The Difference Between Genius and Apostle

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 June 2010

Preacher: Dave Abels

[0 : 00] I came to St. John's October 2005, and I still maintain that Learners Exchange is probably the best kept secret in Vancouver. Like, I love this place. This is a great thing.

And I've come here pretty regularly since then. I had 18 months off where I was gone. And I've been a bit more sporadic since being back as I'm trying to tie up a lot of loose ends.

But it is not lost on me how many great people have stood here and spoken to me, and so I'm very humbled to be able to speak to you today. As I've prepped this week, I need to apologize.

I've had so many people come up to me today and say, I don't know anything about Kierkegaard.

We are ready to go. And I was like, oh, okay. And as I was prepping this week, I had a class with a professor who happens to attend this church and sits in this room and started this group.

When he was, who will remain nameless, who was speaking about the young Puritans and said they had yet to learn the trick of saying one thing. And if you can't say one thing, then don't say anything.

[1 : 14] So I'm going to try to say one thing this morning. And as I refined that and rewrote that all week, Kierkegaard became more and more of a very extended footnote in what I wanted to say.

And so I don't want to disappoint this morning, but I want you to say straight out, the title has shifted quite a bit. And I would love to talk about Kierkegaard on the back side in the question time. But a more apt title for what I want to do today would be, I trust Moses.

I trust Moses, okay? So I just want to turn our expectations so we don't arrive at the end thinking, that is not at all what I showed up here for. But before we really begin, let me just remind us that we are gathered here as Christians.

Which means that whatever has happened in the last hours, weeks, months, and years, we are a people who believe that there is good news in the world.

That we are a people created for glory. And we know it. It's in our bones. That God created us to love Him and to walk with Him. And to shine.

[2 : 33] And in our wisdom, having been given everything, we gave it all away. We gave it all away. And not only that, we loved giving it all away.

And we turned our back on God and we took our own path. And we sought our own glory and we lost it all. And God looks down and He says, I will not have that. And He does for us what we have never done for ourselves.

He saves us, right? He sends His Son to bleed and die the death that was mine, so that I could have life.

And He gives our lives back to us. And the Scriptures teach us that there is no boasting in us, except for in the cross. Amen? Amen. That Christ is the answer.

That He is what we have. And if we don't have Him, we have nothing, right? And so we know, we gather here as people who say that God did not send His Son to bleed and die to make good people better people.

[3 : 39] He came so that He could make dead people alive people. And that is our story. That is who we are. And so that is how we come this morning. That is what we are about.

We are found in Christ. We boast in Christ. We look to Christ. And in that spirit, I would like to pray as we begin this morning. Father in Heaven, You are the Lord.

And there is no God like You. In this city, in this city of great spirituality and very low theology, God, we take a stand as Christians and we say, there is hope nowhere else except for in Your Son, Jesus.

And we praise You. That You sent Your Son and He heard Your voice calling Him and He obeyed You. He willingly suffered and died that You might bring a people home to You.

And Father, we would believe that today and we ask that You would help our unbelief. And so as we speak about Christian things this morning, we ask by Your grace that You would enliven our hearts to what You have to say.

[4 : 50] Your Word tells us, God, that Your eyes search to and fro throughout the land seeking the one whose heart is completely devoted to You, that You may find them and strengthen them. And this day we pray, God, that You would find us, strengthen us, that we might labor faithfully in this city for the glory of Your name.

Amen. Amen. There is no longer a Christian mind.

Amen. Harry Blaymeyers, who many of you may know, wrote a book called *The Christian Mind*.

And he penned those words quite a few decades ago.

There is no longer a Christian mind. What he's saying is that we have fallen, we've been battered around as Christians so much that now even the way that we think about Christian things we think about Christian things secularly.

It's not that we only think about the wrong things, but we think about the right things the wrong way.

And what we need to do is to think Christianly about Christian things.

[6 : 19] And by Christian things, I mean everything. So the world thinks worldly about what they hold dear. And somehow, in all this mess, Christians have begun to take the way that the world thinks and try to frame that up with the Christian faith.

And we're faltering. And I know this is... Talking about the way that we think is like, oh boy. Some of our eyes are already kind of rolling back.

We're like, I don't know if I can do this. So, let me just be very clear about what I'm going to try to do today. That's what I want to address. I'll be arguing a thesis, which sometimes we meditate in here, sometimes we walk through scripture.

Today I'm arguing a thesis that goes something like this. Christians today need to embrace a more Christian way of thinking about things.

Namely, we need to exchange certainty for trust. And if you're still lost, if at any point today you're lost, you're like, Dave's talking about trust.

[7 : 26] I know that at the end, he's talking about trust. He's asking me to trust more. That's what I'm arguing. I just stole all my own thunder and gave it to you. But that's what we're going to do.

So, here's how we're going to do that. I'm going to just talk about the problem for a few minutes.

And that's where most of the heavy lifting is going to be. And so, I'm asking you to use your minds.

I'm not sorry about that, but you will. I'm just giving you a heads up. You're going to have to work a bit harder if you're not used to philosophy and things like that. And in the problem, we're going to be asking the question, how do I know for certain that Christianity is true?

How do I know for certain that Christianity is true? There's the heavy lifting. And the second one is the solution, in which I'm going to argue that we can't.

Therefore, we must trust what God has said. And in that section, we're going to look at three Scripture passages.

[8 : 31] Okay, so now there's a little tension in the room. Great. And then we're going to conclude, okay? So, here's the problem. Here's where we begin. How do I know for sure that Christianity is true?

Often times, those of us who consider ourselves disciples of Christ can pull up and we think to ourselves, you know, we're working all the time, working hard, living my life, trying to raise kids, trying to do everything right.

I'm not raising kids. I don't have any kids. I'm not married. But I was a kid. And my parents worked really hard. Some of you met them.

They were here last week, actually. I hope you didn't. Anyway, we won't stop there. We're living this Christian life. We're working really hard. And all of a sudden, we pull up and we ask ourselves this question, or the question arrives, why am I doing this?

This is hard. And is this right? Because there's not a lot of support. When I meet, I grew up in South Dakota, which happens to not be in the Bible Belt.

[9 : 44] But I grew up in a, I'd go to a coffee shop, and it would be fine. Like, you would just see Bibles sitting around, people having Bible study and hanging out.

And you'd walk in, and you'd be like, hey, you're a Christian too? Great. That's a great Bible study that you're working on there. And they're like, well, I'm not sure to touch it. I come to Vancouver. This is a dry place, man.

I see a guy in a Bible, I see a Bible anywhere in the city, and I'm like running over there. Brother! And I'm like, stand up. And they're like, yes! And there's a certain communion in that place, right? And so I have great respect for those who have grown up in this environment, who are laboring in this environment, because it's hard. This is a hard place to be a Christian. Sometimes the question arises, why am I doing this?

What, or, how, what are some reasons that I can say, like when I'm doubting, what are some reasons that I can just list off, okay, Christianity is true because of this, and this, and this, and this, and this.

[10:44] Because to be honest, if we're not, like, this is a rare thing. What, sorry, we're here on a Sunday morning, okay?

This may not seem bizarre to you, but as I took a walk in my neighborhood this morning, there were a lot of people not here. So I'm kind of like, go do something else, right?

Go away. But, but we are here. And we're here for a reason, right? We're here for a reason. And so in this question of how do I know, how do I believe for sure that Christianity is true, as I came across this question for the first time, when I was at Moody Bible Institute, I started to have these, you know, crisis that you run through, crisis moments, and I started trying to find, okay, how do I shore up my faith, so that I'll be able to withstand some of the onslaughts, as I try to walk this out.

And, I'm like, you know, you're 99% sure Christianity is true. You're looking at all the facts, you're gathering, it's like 99, but it makes sense, it's everything, but there's this kind of nagging thing, like, but what if it's not?

And so, I hope I'm not alone in that feeling. And so I start picking up books, and I'm looking for reasons, I'm looking for somebody who can say, here's how you know for certain.

[12:12] The disciples' lives were changed after the resurrection, so you can know for certain that Christianity is true. Before they were, before the grave, they were all cowards, after the grave, they were just fiery, fiery and full of hope and faith, so Christianity must be true.

The church exists, so Christianity must be true. Some of the philosophical proofs, first cause, like, how did we get here?

Ah, back, why? Bah, oh, because of God. Okay, Christianity must be true. Archaeology, digging up stuff. The Bible says this city was going to be somewhere. It was, it was, we didn't think it was there, and then 20 years later, they dug deeper and found it, and now I really believe.

There's 20,000 manuscripts. I hope you're laughing with me and not at me right there. And I found after, like, going through all these things, you're like, this is not sustaining me.

This is not, like, these things are all great, and they're right, you know? A couple of years ago, they thought they dug up Jesus' tomb, or that, or is it Judas's, and they're like, what happens if we find Jesus' bones?

[13:29] And like, half of my church is like, oh no, what happens if they find Jesus' bones? And I'm like, I think we have more problems than we realize.

Or there's Pascal's Wager, which some of us are familiar with, which Blaise Pascal was a philosopher, existentialist, if that means anything to you.

And he kind of came to the conclusion that reason is going to fail us. And so, it really comes down to a coin flip. And it's better to live your life as if God is real, and find out that he's not, than to live your life as if he's not real, and find out that he is.

Has anybody heard that argument before? Did we just show our hands here? Yeah. Like, this is actually quite, I mean, it's funny to me, I'm glad I can laugh about it now, but it's been, it's been a hard journey, this stuff.

Especially recently, about two weeks ago, I got a call from a friend of mine back in South Dakota, who called me to tell me, he's like, Dave, I am, I am leaving the faith.

[14:38] And that's not like a, that's kind of a rare thing when somebody just calls you up and is like, I'm not just wandering now, I'm actually going to, I'm leaving. And as we talked, what happened is, he's had this search for certainty, and he's tried to hold on to this system of certainty, and as things in your life start to not make sense, and he's like, well, I can't, I can no longer prove that this whole thing holds together, and so the whole thing comes apart, right?

And he walks. And that's a big deal to me, right? Because we're not having this conversation so we can walk out of here and be philosophical, enlightened people. We're having this conversation so that we can live well in this world to the glory of Christ among our peers.

And so, like Blaze, like nice name, but I can't buy the wager. I can't live my whole Christian life just because, in case God really exists, I'm in trouble.

That's not going to sustain me through the sufferings of this world. That's not what Christianity is about. None of these things worked.

And I think the reason that the search for certainty doesn't work is that we're not wired that way.

Reality doesn't work that way. We don't have an intellectual problem with the gospel.

[16:08] We have a sin problem with the gospel. We don't have an intellectual problem with the gospel. We have a sin problem with the gospel. What I mean by that is people don't struggle with faith because there's some like pure spirituality that's just looking at things and trying to make clear decisions.

People, Romans 1 teaches us that our hearts are turned away from Him. Like we don't want to believe. We're trying to, we're suppressing the truth. So when somebody's confronting me with the truths of Christianity, they're not confronting me, it's not like we're having like a conversation about math or something.

They are touching on things that I don't want to believe. There's a confrontation of spirits there. It's not just can I convince you or not convince you. I am calling a sinful heart into life.

That's a different thing. Okay, so we might not, write down questions. If that, I can see we have a little bit of something going on there. Anyway, oftentimes a lot of us will end up standing back and we're trying to figure out the whole Christianity thing before we step into it.

We want to stand outside of it, look on, make sure that this whole thing is for real before we do, make some irreversible mistake, you know, and like really go for this and we won't be able to get out of it.

[17:37] Another way I could say it is we want to understand everything before we will believe. And Augustine is helpful when he says, no, that's not the way it works. We believe in order to understand.

We say yes to Christ and on the backside of obedience we get to see things. We don't see and then say, okay, I trust you now.

He says, are you going to follow me? And we say, yes or no. And then on the backside of that, we walk with him and we see things. Life comes on the backside of obedience.

And as we'll see in a moment, the answer to the question that we're asking, how do I know for certain that Christianity is true is that we don't. Back to the personal side, a good friend of mine, Joel and I, were hanging out at his house a couple weeks ago and we ended up kind of in a bizarre situation where his roommate was gone and that roommate sublet that part of the apartment to another person who none of us knew and so this girl comes home one day and we'll call her name Sarah.

It's not her name. And Sarah comes in and we start talking. We're like, hi. She has keys to the house. She's coming in. We're like, hi, Sarah. Welcome. We live here.

[19:07] And you have keys. Cool. And as we're chatting, we don't know her, obviously, so we're getting to know her.

And find out she's from Edmonton. She has an Anglican background. Grew up in the church. And she's not a believer anymore.

She went to confirmation. She said, this is what she was telling us. She went to confirmation and I think she was in confirmation with like 10 people and nine of them went up to get baptized and she went up and said, I don't believe in Jesus so I'm not going to be confirmed.

And I said, I respect that. I respect that. There are a million coward Christians who would just go up there and just play by the rules. I respect that.

I think you're wrong. And I wish in that moment that I had some kind of argument that I could just pull out and say, here's why Christianity is true and why you have to believe it.

[20:13] I wish I had that kind of arm-bending argument, the knockdown, the one that nobody can defend against that says, for sure, once and for all, now you have to be convinced.

And the reality is I don't think that that argument exists. That people don't come to faith that way. There is no argument that will ultimately knock down everything and uncle somebody into the

kingdom.

It doesn't happen. And so, as we transition here, that kind of typifies the problem that we're a people who are searching for this certainty, trying to say, okay God, I have questions. I'm trying to put all this together. And God's like, actually, I'm calling you to trust me. There is no argument that's going to for sure seal your faith up in that way.

That doesn't exist. So, if we can turn now. We've been talking about the problem. Now let's spend just a few minutes talking about the solution. And I want us to spend, we just assaulted you with Bibles this morning and I'm not sorry about that.

[21 : 26] If you have a Bible, if you would grab it. And we go, I'd like us to discover this part together.

Does anybody need a Bible? There's plenty around, I think. Okay. We've been talking about the problem, now I want to flip over to the solution. And what I want to do is I want to walk through three scripture texts.

one of the texts is a major text that people use to say, the first one we're going to look at is a major text that people use to say, look, Christians need to debate in the public square in a way that is intellectually viable with the world.

And maybe that's an issue we can hit in the question time. And they go to Acts 17, usually, to support this, support themselves at this point.

And they say, look, Paul did it. Paul argued with people. He tried to prove Christianity to people. So should we.

[22 : 43] If you have Acts 17, I'm going to read for us Acts 17, 22 to 34.

Acts 17, 22 to 34. So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said, Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription.

I'm going to stop reading. And I'm going to, this is what this text is about. I'm sorry. Paul has been preaching through to the, mostly to the synagogues, traveling to synagogues, speaking to Jewish people.

And here's the first time that he's kind of turning. And there's like a major address to people who aren't Jewish. Okay? That's what's happening. So before he's finding the places of worship where the Jews are, and he's going in there and he's having conversations about the scriptures with them, but now he's, for the first time, going to a people who have no grasp of the scriptures.

And he's showing up and he's like, okay, what do you do in a context where people don't know anything about the scriptures? Okay, that's what's happening. All right? Apologize for that. We'll begin again. Verse 22. So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said, Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.

[24 : 09] For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God, what therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man. Nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place that they should seek God in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him.

Yet he is actually not that far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being. As even some of your own poets have said, for we are indeed his offspring.

Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

[25 : 20] The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, but others said, we will hear you again about this. So Paul went out from their midst, but some joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius and Areopagate, I think that's how you say that, and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Okay, so, here is what happened. Paul walks into town, never been here before, I don't know, I don't actually know that part. He walks into town, there's a whole bunch of Greeks, and he walks into the place of the public kind of goings-on, and he begins with what they have there.

There's some idols around, some idols to the unknown God, right? And he starts speaking about them, then he ends up quoting their own prophets to them, and then he speaks to them about Jesus. Okay? Does that make sense?

Do you agree? I mean, that's pretty, that's what we read. A lot of people will take this as a framework for saying, look, this is how we engage the world. We begin with where people are at, right?

[26 : 50] And we try to reason with them from that place to the reality of God and the reality of Christ. To which I say, maybe, maybe we do.

If by that, you travel the same trajectory as Paul does. So, stay with me now, okay? Because we're getting, now it's getting kind of deep. Oftentimes, people will say, there are some famous apologists who you get up and people will say, I don't believe in the resurrection of the dead.

And we'll say, that's fine. I can prove the resurrection of the dead to you. Not because there's any scientific proof that doesn't exist, but we can prove it historically, legally, in a viable way.

Has anybody heard about this? Is this common? You've heard this kind of? So, then they proceed to try to prove, you know, Christ didn't, there was not, the swoon theory couldn't have possibly been where he just kind of fainted up on the cross because he lost all of his blood, you know, and he was up there for, he's whipped this many times, so it's pretty much impossible that anybody could revive after something like that.

And they take that kind of argumentation to which I say, no, that is not, that is not what Paul does. Nowhere in our text do we see Paul proving the resurrection.

[28 : 14] He does not set out to somehow convince these men that he's speaking to how the resurrection happened. He argues with them from their gods, from whatever they have, from their place, to a, an understanding of like, you know, God is all around, he's here, and he goes through creation order, right?

He's like, God made all the families of the earth, so this is, that's legit, amen, Paul, good job, what am I saying? I am, I'm an MDiv student, and I add my amen to that.

And then he gets to the end and he says, and here's who God really is. He has revealed himself in Jesus, and God raised him from the dead. That is, that's the clinch of the argument.

God has appointed somebody who's going to judge the world, and we know this because God raised him from the dead. The end. And he puts the resurrection out there as the, the resurrection is the thing that stands, that is the confrontational part, that stands there and pushes in.

We're not, he's not trying to convince people that the resurrection happened, he is proclaiming the resurrection. And the response is actually pretty similar to the way that a lot of the world responds when they hear the gospel.

[29 : 36] Okay, I'm with you, I'm tracking, okay, good, good, that's pretty nice, that's a fun story, that's like interesting, my heart feels good. Resurrection? No way. Not a chance.

A lot of people walk away. Some people are like, okay, I've never, I've never heard this before, I'll hear you some more on this. And some people are like, yeah, that's true, that's true, I'm in, I want that.

That's what the gospel does, that's how people come to faith, right? That is, people come to faith through the gospel. That's our first text, that's a text that a lot of people will try to say, they'll take and say, look, Paul reasons with these people, and I'm trying to show you just in these few minutes, how he, he reasons with them to get to the resurrection, but he doesn't reason with them about the resurrection.

Am I making sense? I mean, okay, good, good, good. Okay, let's, you guys are doing great, that's our first, first text, we got two more. Let's flip over to, where are we at?

Luke 16. And these second two texts, I'm going to use to point us in the right direction, the way that God, I think, the way that God works.

[30 : 58] So if you've been sleeping on us till now, this is the time that you should wake up and really pay attention, okay? Okay. Luke 16, starting in verse 27.

Let me give us the lead up to this. Luke 16, starting in verse 27. Before we get there, again, it goes back to, this is, for me in my, especially in my Bible college years, thinking to myself, Lord, like, I

have wanted to be a pastor my whole life.

I really have. I haven't always loved it that I have loved, that I've wanted to do that. And, but being a pastor is beside the point.

If I just put it in the category of, I haven't always, like, I've been a Christian for most of my life. And there have been times where I'm like, I don't want to do this anymore. Like, I don't, like, my affections do not want to do this anymore.

And it would be so nice if the Lord would just send me a sign that would, that would just catapult me forward. If he would just send me a sign that my faith could just latch onto and that could carry me.

[32 : 28] That would finally convince me so that from here on I can walk. that there's, from that point, God, if you send me a sign that from this point on I will walk with you. I will, my whole life, I will not, I will put my hand to the plow and I will not look back and we will do this thing and we will live faithfully and we will suffer and sing and fight for the gospel and love our neighbor.

Just this sign. And then I read this text that we're reading here. Here's what's happening in this text.

The Pharisees come, Jesus understands them to be a people who are seeking wealth and so he tells them this story about the rich man and an ignored poor man named Lazarus.

And in their life they both had, you know, the rich man had his things and Lazarus sat at his table and was licked by the dogs and then they died. And the rich man goes to, the text says he goes to Hades which we could understand as hell and Lazarus goes to what the text calls Abraham's bosom which we could understand for our purposes as heaven.

And he's, and then they have this conversation. The rich man has a conversation with Abraham with Lazarus standing by and he says, and the rich man is burning in torment and he calls out to Abraham and he says, please, please, send Lazarus to dip his finger in some water and touch it to my tongue that I might be relieved in this fire.

And Lazarus, and Abraham was like, can't happen. You had, you had your shot. Life was lived. You got what you have coming to you now. It's over. Like, life is over. And then we pick up the text in verse 27 with the rich man speaking.

[34 : 14] And the rich man said, then I beg you, Father, send him to my father's house for I have five brothers so that he may warn them lest they also come to this place of torment.

And Abraham says, they have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them. And he said, no, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said to them, if they don't hear Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.

That's intense, man. Because I am pretty sure I would repent if a dead man came and stood in my bedroom and said, you don't want to come this way.

You know, like, I am fully convinced there's a dead man here. And God says, no, you wouldn't. No, you wouldn't. God is working his miracles every day, everywhere.

[35 : 24] And if you can't hear him in his word, there is no thing that will clinch it for you. Which is horrible news. Because your search is destroyed.

Your search for certainty is destroyed. And it is incredible news. Because it means that there is a way out. That this right here is the most powerful thing in the world.

This, what God has said, wins the day. That what is on the table is, do you trust me? Do you trust what I have said? Will you follow me?

It's right here. Either you read this text and you say, no. Or somehow, in the mystery of God, he enlivens your heart and the Spirit of God communicates to my spirit that the things written here are true.

The Spirit of God grabs my spirit and I say, I call God Father. And I know that he is my Father. And, the last text that I want to look at is Exodus 3.

[36 : 39] And this has been a very important text for me in my time in Vancouver, in my time at Regent. Theological education is kind of a bizarre animal and he can just does weird things to your relationship with the Lord and I don't love it all the time.

But this has been a great text that has just been like, God makes promises, right? And he keeps them. And so we walk faithfully in that context.

Exodus 3, beginning in verse 7. So what we have, if you're not familiar with the story, Moses is born illegally, is raised in Pharaoh's house, looks on his people in slavery and he tries to save them himself and he fails and he flees into the wilderness and he's there for a long, long time having

been a failure.

And then he sees this burning bush and God speaks to him. And this is what God says, I'm sending you back.

I am sending you to the place of your failure to save my people. And it goes something like this starting in verse 7.

[38 : 05] Then the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their suffering and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of the land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

And now behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

But Moses said to God, this seems totally legitimate to me, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?

Answer, God says to them, I will be with you and this will be a sign for you that I have sent you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.

So they're having this conversation and Moses asks them, like, are you, seriously?

[39 : 29] He's like, do you know who I am? Because I am not anybody and you're sending me back? He's like, I will be with you. And this will be a sign. Sweet. We have a sign coming up, right?

Like, God's going to give us a sign that we have confidence to go back to Egypt and what's the sign? What is the sign in the text? When you come out, you will worship me here.

Dude, that is not a sign. That is nothing. You are sending me back and the sign for me is that I'll be back here sometime.

Yep. That is a promise. Right? This will be a sign to you. You will worship me here. Okay.

Okay. That God makes a promise and we say yes. Okay. To me, this is the contour of the Christian life. This is the way in which we believe.

[40 : 37] We do not seek complete and total certainty and understanding and comprehensive knowledge. We don't get that. We don't get that. We get a promise from the Lord. The Bible calls us children of Abraham, man of faith.

Abraham, I would like you to sacrifice your son. Alright. I do not understand it.

I will do that. But, God makes a promise and we say yes. The New Testament teaches us that all of God's promises find their yes.

Where? In Jesus. In Jesus Christ. So now I think we are called to trust Christ.

To trust what he has said. To walk faithfully. knowing that God does not fail in keeping his promises. And that Abraham, we are children of Abraham, that Abraham died believing the promise with a tomb.

[41 : 47] He died with a tomb. He owned a tomb. And he had a promise. And he faithfully walked it out. That to me is the contour of the Christian life.

That is what we are called to. Not certainty, not some kind of knock down argumentation, but a people who have heard the Lord's word and have said yes, I will follow you.

By way of conclusion, we'll just wrap this up. Let's tell you a story and then a few concluding words. I worked with a church plant in South Dakota.

It was a self-proclaimed post-modern church plant. And it was as awful as it sounds.

It was a mess. And everybody was trying to be really cool and do new things and say things that have never been said before.

[42 : 47] It's really not what we're going for. We're trying to say things that have been said a lot of times over and over. And one particular night, though, God did work there and it was a great, great time.

A few friends were at a park worshipping and afterwards, and it was a bit, being a post-modern church plant, you can creatively imagine some of our friends, the kind of people who would be like, oh, I would like to go to a post-modern church.

And so after the service, we're hanging out and a guy walks up who I mistake for being a member of our church. I don't know him, but he looks like the kind of guy who would have come to the service.

I did love him. I don't want to be... Sorry, I'll just persevere here. And he's carrying a skateboard, he had hair down to his waist, and he's like, hey, have you seen my friend Lizzie around?

And I'm like, nope. No, I haven't. I don't know Lizzie. What did you think of the service? And he's like, what's that? What? I'm like, oh, oh, you were not at the service?

[43 : 56] He's like, no. And I was like, oh, because we just met in the park. We're a church. We just met in the park and he's like, oh, so what do you guys do? I'm like, well, or what did you guys do tonight? Well, we sang a lot because this church loves to experience God in worship and we got the Bible out and we taught a little bit and he's like, I don't believe the Bible.

And I remember distinctly, I had my Bible sitting next to me. I was sitting down and I picked it up and I said, that's okay. I can convince you that God is real without the Bible.

And I put it behind me so it wouldn't be a barrier to our conversation. And we began talking and it's just like, okay, and then it's like, okay, fine, and it leaves.

And I look back on that and I've asked the Lord to forgive me for that because that is not right. I'm a Christian and I believe this is true. And when he comes, I don't believe in the Bible.

I'm like, that's okay, man. You can walk with us for a while. I'd like to get to know you. I love Jesus and this is his word and he's real and he gives dead people life. And if you want in on that, you should get in on that.

[45 : 08] And if you don't want in on that, you should get in on it anyway because you're in trouble. Right? But that's the gospel, right? That is not, I'm not going to argue with him about whether the Bible is true or not.

And so, I just conclude with that story kind of wrapping it up that we as disciples, we believe Christianity is true because at some point God has called out to us and we have said yes, yes, amen to what he has said to us.

That's why we're here. Not because everything always makes sense. Because we don't get to know everything. We are people who have heard a promise, who have responded in faith, and who carry that promise with us, communicating it to this world for the glory of Christ among the nations.

And so, let me just end as we began and then I'll pray for us and we can ask some questions. Let me end as we began in this. We were made for glory and we gave it away.

And God did for us what we could not do for ourselves. And he sends his son to bleed and die not that good people could become better people, but so that dead people could become alive people.

[46 : 36] That's who we are. Let's pray. Let's pray. Father in heaven, I thank you for this time. I thank you for your spirit, for your word.

I thank you for my brothers and sisters. And above all, God, we thank you for your son, Jesus, who is our hope. We pray, God, that you would bless your word and whatever words have been from you to our hearts to sustain us, that we might live faithfully before you.

And so we may meet you with an uplifted face, having walked well according to your promises in Jesus Christ. God, I pray now as we enter the question time that you would grant us grace to question hard, to press in, and to try to figure some of these things out, that we might know you as you are and not as we would have you to be.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Okay. I have a few questions for me.

I could start with some of my questions, but I'm curious if there are any questions. Well, we'll start there. If there are any questions. Yeah. Do you want to explain your digression and your digression over that?

[48 : 01] Yes. Yes, I do. God bless you. God bless you. Okay, so I'll just try to do this quickly.

I'm sorry. We can talk about it later, but I pick up Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard is a Danish. I'm going to move this over here. Kierkegaard is a Danish philosopher who grew up in a culture where everybody's Christian and therefore kind of nobody's Christian and I grew up in some of that kind of stuff so I started reading him.

I came across this essay called The Distinction Between Genius and Apostle which was going to be our talk today in which let me back up.

Kierkegaard is trying to say you have to experience God. If you're a Christian, you have to experience him at some level. You can't just keep doing this stuff. He can't just do stuff and be like this is what Christianity is.

You have to meet him. You have to know him somehow. And so he starts writing about all this and he kind of is so that's where existentialism comes from that kind of like I want to experience God.

[49 : 09] And he ends up I think making a few mistakes. He ends up kind of floating it out there a bit like he takes kind of the authority out of the text of Scripture and puts it kind of in your experience of who God is.

And then it gets a little bit it can get a little bit loose out there, right? And so a pastor comes along and says I had a divine revelation and he speaks and the church around him is like actually brother that is not that is not what we're about.

And then he repents this pastor repents and claims that his work was not a work of revelation or apostleship but a work of genius meaning I'm just a smart guy who put some pieces together and came up with this thing.

And so then Kierkegaard tries to correct the ship a little bit and because this guy had taken some of Kierkegaard's own philosophy and shown what it can do so he's trying to pull the ship back and trying to root root himself a little bit more ground theology a bit more and in so doing he comes up with these two categories of apostleship and genius apostleship being a category of revelation so it necessarily carries authority God said this there it is right and genius being a work that is accountable to the community where you're just kind of having thoughts and you're thinking about these things together and so that this in me spawns like okay there's two kinds of thoughts there's two kinds of thinking in the world there's the thinking according to natural reason and there's the thinking that comes according to revelation revelation and because of some other influences in my life if this means anything to anybody

Cornelius Van Till was a big one in my life I am I because of him I speak the way I do today that nobody nobody just reasons themselves into the faith nobody looks at all the evidence comes up with the best answer surprise it's Jesus I don't think that happens and so that's kind of the digression pattern not sure if that's helpful or not that explains it just raises a ton of questions more than it answers but anyway if anybody wants to ask press in on that if you want to come back at me on that or is okay yeah yeah and so in my heart then I think partially because my own friend decided to walk from the faith in the last couple weeks it's really been tugging on me to figure out like that's a pastoral question for me right and so that began to drive a little bit of this and then it happens to all of you that I get to speak on something a little bit different than I had originally intended for which I am exceedingly grateful any other yeah Bill driving in this morning

[52 : 11] I said to Betty salvation isn't something that we need to work for but spirituality what you talked about Christian thinking thinking like a Christian has to be worked at focused in someone so there's work there there's work there but there's not work because salvation is a gift there's no relationship although belief is in there and trust is in there somewhere but we didn't have to really work at it but to think like a Christian once that is about spirituality that has to be true yeah I absolutely agree I mean the text that comes to mind is

Philippians 2 therefore my Philippians 2 12 therefore my beloved as you have always obeyed so now not only in my presence but much more in my absence work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure and I think it is the task of the Christian always to seek to think God's thoughts after him right we want to think the way that he thinks and and so there is a lot of work I mean that's to me is the task for all of us for the rest of our lives right is is to get to know a person and to think like the father of the son of the holy spirit through his word to think his thoughts after him yeah so I agree totally and having a love for Christ and what he did for us in our lives and the life to come.

I think we're taught to judge ourselves rightly. And so I think we need to, at times, as Bill mentioned, the spiritual walk, we have to be looking at at times.

Especially those moments when we feel like we've expressed today, when we believe, how deeply do we do? What can I do to serve the world better?

It's a form of sort of deciding ourselves in a way, being conscious of that. Yeah. Which, I mean, for me, I absolutely agree with you, Betty.

[55 : 27] And I am greatly encouraged because the fact that you are asking that question here and now with us says to me that we here are serious about what you're saying.

That God is calling people here to think about who he is and to labor into that, what he's saying. So I agree with you. I'm greatly encouraged there. There was a question in the back.

Okay. No. Here. Is your form of ascent, therefore, your, let's say, gospel has its own form of ascent, you can tell it.

And your certainty, therefore, is private, but you can't share it with other people. Is that what you're saying? I am saying that, I am arguing that certainty, I don't, I want to speak well and simply.

I would, I would want to say something like, I want to say that certainty, our idea of certainty needs to be touselled a little bit. So that, because I, what I want to say, sorry, I'll just say what I want to say.

[56 : 45] How about that? That'd be great. I want to say I don't believe in certainty. And at the same time, I want to say, Dave, how do you know that God is, that Jesus is coming back for you?

Because he said he would. He said he would prepare a place for me. And I believe him. But there's a rub that, those aren't necessarily contrary ideas, but it seems to me that there's something pulling in there, and I'm not as articulate as I would like to be to define that.

There are probably, you may be able, Harvey, to actually shed some more light on that. I don't know. Does that make sense? No. Yeah, sure, sure. I'm not sure if I can answer your question, though. Your reference book is back, sorry, I don't know.

I'll make this. Yeah. Why didn't Paul give a witness, like a good evangelical, to the Damascus Roman Spirit? Those guys in Athens?

I don't know. No, he didn't. He didn't give his personal witness. No. No. So, but what he did do is he walked with them from what they knew to the resurrection.

[57 : 53] So, I think he could have. In other places in Acts, he does, right? Yeah.

Do you think, are you making the point that he is arguing intellectually? Are you trying to come back at that point a little bit? Right. I think there's, the gospel has its own form of a saint. Right. He's quoted in some puritan's language.

Which I think is brilliantly insightful. Yeah. They're part of a 19-year Christian tradition. And we can be proud of that. Yeah. It's not irrational. Yep. It's not, it's not.

Yeah. Well, just take a jump into the gospel and see what you feel like. Right. It's not silly like that. Right. But it has the witness God will indicate. Right.

That's what I, that's actually very helpful. I expected more questions to that on that line, actually. But, it's very helpful. It's not, it's not irrational. But you don't, but rationalism won't get you into the faith.

[58 : 57] The gospel gets you into the faith. And the gospel sustains you in the faith. And it makes sense. If you're a Christian, the Christian life makes sense. You just don't get to know all the pieces. But you get to know, like, the world makes sense inside of Christianity.

So, thank you, Harvey, for that. Right here. The saying that no one comes to the Father like the Father goes through the Holy Spirit. And so, I think that's true conviction.

That the hunger of death, you know. I've seen that many times. Yeah. And, well, I've been telling you that I will send a helper to you who will reveal the things of me in Christ.

So, that you know, you know, you know, you know. And I think you're convinced internally about that. It's very powerful. Yeah. Yeah.

So, it's not really reason. I mean, Paul, on the page of Pegasus, he's talking about the poets that the Greeks have in the past.

[59 : 58] And he's just using that. He obviously studied it. So, he did work at it. So, he knew something of the history of the Greeks. Yeah. And the philosophy and their beliefs, you know. Yeah.

So, he used that. And the inspiration of God came through. Yeah. So, I, that's great. That's great right there. That he reasons with them. He's not against reason.

He's just against reason being the comprehensive category. So, he speaks with them. And he makes sense with them. And he's building arguments. That's all good. That's fine. But he's taking them to the cross.

He's taking them to Jesus. He's not trying to convince them with the reason. He's dialoguing. He's using that as a tool. Right? To get to the cross.

Another question over here. Yeah. I want to cut right to the chase. Because I know we're running out of time. Are we? And my question is, is Kierkegaard a Christian figure or not?

[60 : 56] I know he was a, you know, thorough Lutheran, which may or may not speak to him about him being a Christian. So, I said, I was going to cut to the chase.

That was quite cut and there's the chase. Is he a Christian thinker or not?

Yes. I am. Is he a Christian or not? You're asking a different question. Is he a Christian thinker?

Because we started talking about Christian thinking. I would imagine that a man of my small stature should not answer that question.

No. I have to go back and read him again. You should. You should.

Oh. I'm sorry. It's charming. But I always got the feeling like I was going off down this wonderful intellectual path and I'm lost there.

[61 : 57] Well, then you're in good company if you felt that way. We are. But I would say it's helpful. He's not speaking directly to our culture.

So, it's helpful to understand if you're going to read him, which you all should. No, you all shouldn't. But some of you should. Some of you should. And if you're going to read him, you should try to understand him, who he's speaking to you, why he's saying what he's saying.

And that would be helpful, I think, to try to historically situate what he's saying. But I ought not say more than that. I am trembling up here. With fear and trembling, actually.

Yeah, was there another question back here? Yes, sir. Just a brief comment. To let Chirpigard speak to that question, don't you have difficulties with an either-or question?

Touché. Touché. I'm not touching that. Santa, do you have a question? That was very witty, by the way. Thanks. I really like what you said.

[63 : 02] It sounds like we've been thinking a lot of the same thoughts. I would suggest maybe about certainty that I would think that we maybe can't be certain, but that we could accept all things as provisionally true, and that faith is accepting the best answer for things.

I don't know how to live my life consistently, and that God doesn't exist. It makes sense.

I would say to Sarah, maybe, that I have some respect for you for being able to speak the truth and answer that, and there'll be a question about Jesus, but there's probably more reason to think that he is true than he isn't.

There won't be 100%. Yes, he is. But Romans 1 seems to say that, where it says, for its integration of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen. Why? Or what's that point to? It points to that man are without excuse. So that seems to indicate to me that there, that all of us should side with, yes, God is real.

[64 : 34] That's his word, saying, at the end, I showed you enough. Why didn't you side with me?

Yeah. I would say, so that's actually, thanks, Sam, for saying that. I would say, the reason that you're able to say what you're saying right now is because God has worked in your heart for you to see those things, right?

Like, there's that tension there. And we came across it last week, in the question of why doesn't God answer prayer for salvation for us? And we've got free will, but we don't only have free will. I mean, if it was only a free will, I wouldn't be saying that I can believe in God. Right. But I don't know how to reconcile those two things. But at the end, God will, I believe, say Romans 1 back to each one of them.

Absolutely. Absolutely. On that, I can unashamedly affirm that every person that you run into, because if Christianity is true for us, like, if it's true, it's true across the board.

[65 : 38] It's true for everyone everywhere, right? And if Romans 1 is saying, God has shown himself in this world in such a way where everyone is without excuse. And if, like, Vancouver, seriously, when I moved here, I'm like, everyone's got their iPods on in the bus, and I'm plastered against the bus window, like, do you see this here?

Like, do you understand? Like, God is. And that's true. At the end, everybody is without excuse. God is. I wish we had more time to kind of dialogue on the question of, so it makes sense to trust in God.

Because I don't, I would say, for some people, if you don't believe in God, or if you don't want to believe in Him, then it doesn't make sense to believe in Him. Yeah, that's what I, I mean, that sounds incoherent, but that's what I mean.

If you don't already believe in Him, then it doesn't make sense. If we're having an argument, if we go all the way down to the bedrock, what's down at the bottom is, I believe in Him, and you don't. And if we start on the premises of we don't, all the argumentation in the world will never convince somebody, will never change that foundation.

I should, I think we've got to be, I think we've got to close up shop here. Is that okay? I'd like to say, I think I should stop there, Sam, I don't know.

[67 : 09] The whole, like, because it makes sense part still has me intrigued. Like, I, but I, maybe we should just talk about it after, sorry. Wow, I got really eloquent there for a second. I think that you're talking about faith-seeking understanding that some worldviews are obviously stronger than

others.

So, when you're looking at that, Christianity just doesn't take a backseat to any other world faith in the world. There was a guy named Simon Green, Dr. Simon Green.

He was an atheist and a Jew, and he was challenged or goaded by his colleagues to at least look at the evidence for the resurrection and make his decision for Christ based on that. The interesting thing with him, though, is that he was, at his time, the world's foremost authority on evidences that you could admit into a court of law.

After his exhaustive study, he came to the conclusion there wasn't a single unbiased theory on the planet that could look at that evidence and deny the resurrection. But as well, when you look at the, like you say, the manuscript evidence, archaeological, predictive props, statistical probabilities, all of those things collectively, it may not prove it, that it says that it's a much stronger alternative than all the other ones.

Okay. Thank you. That was a very... You're not a blind leaf in a dark castle. Absolutely. That was a very articulate question. And I would say... But that's actually very helpful because that's a pointed question against something that I said, or at least contributing.

[68 : 41] And I would say all those things, like all those, the reasons that Christianity is true, I think are great.

They're great. But they don't... But they don't affect... I don't believe in Christ more because of those things. I'm like, in my head, of course.

Like, oh, we dug up this city. I'm like, of course we did. You know? I don't... That archaeological dig is not pulling me into a firmer faith with the Lord.

I already love Him and I'm following Him. So when we're finding and digging up at 20,000 manuscripts and, you know, historical evidence and legal evidence, those things to me, having already been on the inside of the faith, it just shows me, like, of course my worldview is coherent because Christianity has the true story about the way the world is.

And so all these things would make sense. But it's better than the other guy's worldview. And it's better than the other guy's worldview. And so, to me, if I were in a real conversation, if I can ground this for us, for those of us who would be, like, using this kind of knowledge right now, that kind of thing would serve to unhinge somebody else's worldview.

[70 : 00] What it would serve to do is say, your worldview doesn't have answers. Like, inside of your system, you don't have answers for these things. Inside of Christianity, there are answers. And so what it serves to do is to poke holes in their worldview and create doubt in their worldview.

But I don't think that on its own is going to pull somebody over. I think people... The gospel is what changes somebody's heart and crosses them over.

I'm just beating the same drum over and over, aren't I? Yeah. But thank you very much. Thank you very much. One of your gifts, by the way, you should know, is facing the music.

You very well face the music. You very well face that. And you're up to speed. And you're a warrior in facing the music. And there's a lot of music in the church, isn't there?

I'm just a worshiper, so... I don't have a King James, but Hebrews 11.1, can you quote it?

[71 : 08] Faith chapter. Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen. That's this transfer.

I think the King James does it more dramatically in a sort of a Shakespearean prosy way, which is easy to remember than I've forgotten. This one actually says certainty of things.

Certainty. Which I think is very much younger. That's all about our faith and our trust in the Lord.

Bill, is this the last class of the week and before the ceremony?

Why do you ask? If it is, if it is, you left the best to last. Ah, brother. Thank you.

Thank you. I've got to now tell you who's speaking for the last two Sundays, haven't I? Jim Packer.

Oh! And, uh...

[72 : 13] Olaf's sleigh maker. So, uh... You want to take anything back? Yeah, well done. Thank you very much.

That was good. Thank you. Thank you.