



Jesus As He Really Is

Love Made Known #4

We are in 1 John 2:18. If you have a Bible, turn to 1 John. If you did not bring a Bible with you, feel free to follow the verses on the screen. Before we dive into this morning's text, I want to ask those of you who are new to our church or Christianity (or even if you're not new), Who is Jesus to you? Who is Jesus to you? Your answer to that question really should be based on your answer to a more fundamental question: Who is Jesus?

Our culture says, "Jesus is Whoever you want Him to be." For example, this is the viewpoint of the Unitarian Universalist Church. I was reading some testimonials on their website and here's what some people on their website said about Jesus. One person said:

As an agnostic humanist I find a deep resonance with the Jesus portrayed in the gospels. Here is a man who healed the sick, fed the hungry and clothed the poor. He did something about the suffering He saw around Him because He felt connected to those who suffered. He was a revolutionary in this way, going outside of the existing structures to right the wrongs of the system. This ethic is consonant with the religious humanism and I find it both educational and inspirational.

That aspect of Jesus resonates with me too. I don't know about the "religious humanism" part, but certainly Jesus, as a Man full of compassion and One Who pursues mercy, love and justice resonates with me too.

One person said, "I connect to Jesus as a Person Who wanted to fix the problems He saw in His faith community and society to build the community that He knew was possible rather than simply go through the motions of everyday life. It was in, though, my de-deification," in other words, taking away the concept that Jesus is God, "It was in my de-deification of Jesus that I could reconnect with His story, trading Messiah for mentor."

Another person said:

I left Christianity behind as a teenager, but when I sought a Unitarian Universalist congregation to support my children's liberal religious education and then began working as their Director of Religious Education, I encountered Jesus again. As an agnostic, I saw Him as one of an all-star team of important religious teachers I promised to represent with care, so young people could learn about Christianity alongside other religions. I felt no special affinity to Him, but in the years since, I have begun to see Him as something like an experienced colleague in a challenging field—someone with whom I share a professional concern.

All of these ideas about Jesus boil down to is what is called Relativism, which says there is no absolute truth in general, and certainly, when it comes to Jesus Christ, there is no absolute truth about Who He is, what He has done and what He will do. Jesus is Whoever you want Him to be, whatever resonates with you, whatever you're most impressed by—that is Who Jesus is to you. That's the belief system of the culture that surrounds the church.

If that's how you view Jesus, I'm glad that you're here. You are going to hear some things in this message that you might disagree with, but this is a place where we can process and explore Who Jesus has really revealed Himself to be. The problem with the mood or belief system of relativism is not just of the culture surrounding the church; sometimes it influences people within the church. That's what was happening here in the 1st Century community to which John is writing this letter.

There's discouragement and confusion over people who have been leaving the church in the Christian community to which John is writing. They're not just leaving the church. Listen, if you come to any of our church campuses and disagree on minor issues (like the music is too loud, etc.) and you go to another gospel-preaching church that loves the Word, there is no problem whatsoever. But that's not what is happening here. People aren't just leaving and going to another church because of preferences. These are folks who aren't just leaving a particular church—they are leaving the Orthodox teaching of the historic church. They are walking away from the historic Christian faith, so people are disillusioned, discouraged and confused as they see that happening.

John writes into that situation in John 2:18-27:

¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. ²⁰ But you [Christians] have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.²¹ I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. ²⁴ Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. ²⁶ I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷ But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

This is God's Word.

You hear John's love and concern for these believers in the way he addresses them as he refers to them as children; not just children of God which he will talk about further down in chapter three, but he

sees himself as a spiritual father figure to them and he wants to protect them from false teaching. He wants to reassure them that the gospel that they have received and believed is actually true. It is the truth. He says in verse 18, “*Children, it is the last hour...*” This concept of the last hour is found throughout the Bible. Sometimes it’s referred to as “The last days,” or “The last times,” which is the time period between the first and Second Coming of Jesus. When Christ came in the Incarnation, world history transitioned into the last hour. According to Jesus and the Apostles, including John in this letter, we are currently living in the Last Times, the Last Days, the Last Hour.

John says to these 1st Century Christians, “One of the ways you know it’s the Last Hour, ‘...as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come’” (verse 18). He says, “You’ve heard the antichrist is coming.” John is the only biblical writer to actually use this term. It is not used in any other part of the Bible, but the idea is throughout the Bible. The Old and New Testaments record prophecies about a powerful figure who would rise to power in the End Times and deceive masses of people from believing in Jesus.

You see this in the book of Daniel in the Old Testament and in I Thessalonians and Revelation in the New Testament for a couple of examples. Even if you didn’t grow up in church, you may have seen some weird movies where people disappear and are left behind, raptured, cars left running on a belt-way and everyone is running around scared. There is some weirdness to those movies, but there is a part that is true. God prophesied through His prophets in Scripture, that there is this world figure that will rise in the end times and he will deceive masses of people away from believing in Jesus.

But that’s not John’s focus in this letter. John says, “You’ve heard that the antichrist is coming in the future, but you have many antichrists at work in your church right now.” That’s why in verse 26 he says, “*I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.*” These are professing Christians who have been active in church, most likely having professed faith in Jesus, been baptized and were regular participants in the life of the church. Yet now they have changed their minds. Their beliefs are evolving. Specifically, John says in verse 22, they are now denying that Jesus is the Christ. Notice, they’re not denying everything about Jesus. They aren’t denying His existence. They may have been rocking t-shirts that said, “Jesus is my Homeboy.” They’re probably not denying that Jesus is holy and in some sense a Messenger from God. They’re not denying everything about Jesus, but they’re denying something very specific and essential about Jesus—that He is the Christ. John elaborates on that throughout his letter.

Look at 1 John 4:1-3. He explains this even more:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

How do you recognize that the Spirit of God is really at work through a prophet or preacher?

² *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.*

He says “There’s the spirit of the antichrist. This attitude, belief system, agenda is already at work, not just in the culture in the broader society, but is already at work in the church. These people are denying the Person of Christ, that He was fully God and fully man. We don’t know what the specific teaching was. We have some examples. Eusebius, an early church historian, writes some description of false teaching at that time. We know they were separating Jesus of Nazareth—the human being, the moral teacher, the good man—from the Messiah, the Christ—from God. They’re denying that Jesus was fully God and fully man. They are denying the Person of Christ.

In chapter five we see that they were also denying the exclusive work of Christ. Look at 1 John 5:10-11: “*Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar...*” Now, those are not my words but what John is saying. If you reject what God has revealed and swap it out for your own ideas, you’re basically calling God a liar. You’re saying, “God, what You have said and revealed in Your Word is not true. I know better. My preferences, cultural experience and philosophical system are better measurements and evaluations of truth than You, God, Who created all things, then embedded creation with the laws of logic and nature. We know that in this little blip of time called the 21st Century in America, we know better than You, God.”

John says in 5:10-11, “*Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*” What does God say about Jesus? He says, “The hope of the eternal afterlife with God is found in one place: in His Son, Jesus Christ.” The diagnosis of the gospel is that the problem is not only that we face death. We face death as a consequence of our sin. It’s not only that we face death (which is bad enough), but also that apart from Christ, death seals our fate as sinners who will be rejected by God, and rightfully so. But it doesn’t have to be that way.

The good news of the gospel is that God wants us to enjoy eternal life rather than experiencing eternal judgement, so He sent Christ, the Eternal Son of God, to do what we could not do—to be born of a virgin, to grow up and live as a human being, to live a sinless, perfectly righteous life. We could not do that, but that is the standard of righteousness and holiness that is required in order to be accepted by God. Your mom didn’t even let you come inside with dirt on your shoes. Why do we think God would allow us to enter eternal relationship with Him when we are sinners? God’s standard is perfect righteousness and holiness, which we cannot do, so He sent Jesus to live that perfectly righteous life on our behalf. He sent Jesus, the Son of God, to die on the cross in our place, paying the penalty of our sin, so that when we face death, we don’t have to pay the penalty for our own sin.

He sent the Eternal Son of God to be risen from the dead so that through Him, we can have eternal life. God sent Jesus to do what we cannot do. God gives us eternal life, but it is only found by trusting in Jesus—not an idea of Jesus that fits our culture and personality preferences but trusting in the real Jesus revealed in the gospel.

These antichrists were denying the Person and exclusive work of Christ, yet they were still claiming to have fellowship with God the Father. John says, “That’s impossible!” Verse 22 says, “*Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.*” You might say, “Wait, they weren’t denying the Father. They were just denying that Jesus is the Son of God.” John says, “That’s not how this works. You don’t get to pick and choose.” Verse 23 says, “*No one who denies the Son has the Father...*” These are not my words. These are John’s words inspired by the Spirit for us. He says, “*No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.*”

It’s important to understand this isn’t just John’s opinion; he’s literally repeating what Jesus taught. We like Jesus as a moral Teacher until we actually read His teaching. The same apostle who wrote this letter records Jesus’ words in John 14:6: “*Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’*” That’s either incredibly arrogant, delusional or true. He says, “*No one comes to the Father except through me.*” That’s why John writes what he writes in verse 19. These Christians were watching family members and friends abandon historic Christian teaching. I imagine this was extremely discouraging and confusing for these 1st Century Christians. How can people who are born again walk away from Christ?

Does this mean it’s possible to receive salvation and then lose it? John says, “No. They didn’t lose their salvation.” He says in verse 19, “*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.*” This can be confusing and discouraging.

I have good friends who were very devoted Christians (at least from the outside looking in) who have now completely rejected the gospel. If you’re new to Christianity or the church, you might already be ready to walk out, disagreeing with me, or thinking I’m super arrogant because of what I’m saying. I’m literally reading the verses and explaining them. When I talk about this, it’s not like “us and them.” I don’t think I’m holy and righteous, but they are not. That’s not it at all. We ran the streets together, went to the clubs together, ran as far away from Jesus as we possibly could TOGETHER. Even while I was running away from Christ, in His love and mercy, He was pursuing me. These are the same guys I used to hang out with when God broke into our lives as students of the University of Maryland and began showing us, not just intellectually but in our hearts, that Jesus is the Christ. He began showing us our sin before Him, how much God loves us and how God has so much more in store for us than we

could pursue outside of Him. He began to change us; we started going to Bible Study, then teaching Bible study and doing ministry together. But over time, some of those guys with walked away.

This is not something I say with arrogance but with broken-heartedness. That can be confusing and discouraging when you're trying to walk with Jesus and people around you are walking with Jesus, but then peel off and believe other things, rejecting Christianity.

Jesus explains how this works in Luke 8:13 where He gives the parable of the soils. A sower goes out and sows seed. It is an analogy for the Word of God—the gospel that goes out—and like seeds land on various soil, the Word of God lands on human hearts. There are different kinds of soil, different heart conditions, that the gospel lands on. Luke 13:8 says, *“And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy.”* He didn't say when they hear the Word they reject it. He said, *“...when they hear the word, [they] receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.”*

They hear and receive the gospel with joy. They believe for a while, then when their faith is pressed—when that high school student who was great in youth group goes to college and for the first time begins to interact with non-Christian beliefs and teachings, becoming “more enlightened”—when that faith is tested, he or she falls away. That's why John emphasizes over and over that it isn't what you said you believed back then, but what you are believing and trusting in today.

Some people reject the gospel but still identify as Christian out of nostalgia, culture heritage or as a good, moral foundation. But John is clear that when you reject the truth about Christ, you prove you are not a Christian. How can you reject Jesus as Christ and be a Christian? That's not my call to make. We are reading what Jesus Himself taught and also what was taught through His disciples. He is speaking of professing Christians who had changed their minds about Jesus and had grown into a more “enlightened view” of Jesus and were trying to persuade others to follow suit.

In 21st Century America it would sound like this: “Come on, I know what we learned in church growing up, but you can't possibly believe that Jesus was God. We've evolved beyond those rigid, tribalistic notions of religion. You can't possibly believe that Jesus is the only way to Heaven. There's no way that a loving God would reject people just because they didn't believe in Jesus.” It's okay to wrestle with these things. It's difficult to reconcile sometimes. There's no way in the world we should rejoice over the doctrine of hell or Jesus rejecting people. If you really understand your own spiritual condition apart from Christ, there's no way we should rejoice in that. It should be difficult for us to accept. But I am not willing to reject what Jesus taught simply because it's hard; either I trust Jesus or I don't.

Let's look at three things from what we've been talking about that are important for you to know and wrestle with.

#1 – Satan wants to deceive you.

You might think that's a little dramatic or extreme. You might even think it's a little manipulative. I can hear you say, "That's such a classic preacher move to take people you disagree with and label them as Satanic." Drop the mic; walk away. But Jesus and His disciples had a very different view of false teaching than many of us have today. We hear false teaching and think, "Let's just agree to disagree. There are interesting ideas we can explore and process." Jesus said to His disciple, Simon Peter, who was going to be tempted to turn away from Jesus and actually did for a little while and then repented and turned back, "*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers*" (Luke 22:31-32).

The Apostle Paul, who had rejected Jesus and pursued Christians so they would be put into prison or killed, becomes a follower of Jesus Christ because he sees and believes the truth of the gospel. He writes in I Timothy 4:1-2, "*Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith.*" They will say, "I don't believe this anymore." Paul, under the inspiration of the Spirit says, "Let me take you a little deeper underneath what's happening there." "*...some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.*" He says, "False teachers are not the ultimate problem but are just the medium of spiritual forces of deception." Does that sound prehistoric and ridiculous? Yes. But it's what Jesus taught and believed. I'm going to go with Jesus and believe Him. He died and rose from the dead. "*Consciences are seared.*" That means that these false teachers believed what they are saying is true, yet it has devastating consequences.

I was reading about a four-month-old baby whose parents took him to a neighborhood party at a 77-year-old neighbor's house. He went down to his basement to get some spring water and poured it into the baby's formula. What he didn't see and what the family didn't realize at first was that the bottle had a folded and taped over label that read, "Arsenic and Total Weed Killer." In 2005, a judge found that 77-year-old man not guilty of involuntary manslaughter. It was an accident. He didn't know. He grabbed the jug thinking it was what that baby needed, but it was devastating.

There are some men, women and pastors in churches who are guilty of involuntary manslaughter. I'm not saying they're bad people. I might love to hang out with them, go on a road trip or talk about basketball with them. But Jesus and His disciples saw false teaching as poison with devastating eternal consequences. This isn't my teaching. I'm trying to show you what Jesus and His disciples taught and you decide what to believe.

Islam rejects Jesus as Messiah. I know some Muslims who are really good people. Some are better people than some of you, just to be real! But Islam rejects Jesus as Messiah. They say he was a

prophet, worthy of respect but not worship. They say he didn't really die on the cross and certainly didn't rise from the dead.

Judaism rejects Jesus as Messiah. They say that He was not God and was a blasphemer. Jehovah's Witnesses reject the full deity of Christ. They say He is a god among many but is inferior to the Father. Black Hebrew Israelites reject the deity of Christ. This is not just, "All paths lead to God. We all kind of believe the same thing." The only way you believe that is if you're willing to disrespect all of these religions. They're not saying or teaching the same thing.

Satan wants to deceive you. Here's the good news: if you're in Christ, Jesus has equipped you.

#2 – If you're in Christ, Jesus has equipped you.

You say, "In a world of all of these swirling ideas and this and that teaching, what do I do?" Jesus has equipped you! He has not left you alone. If you're not a Christian, He has not left you in the dark to try to figure this out on your own. Jesus has equipped each one of us with His Word.

I showed up at a campus pastor's meeting and I saw our lead pastor. I walked in and he had on some fresh shoes—classic, all-white Stan Smith's. I walked in like, "My man, Dale! You're trying to keep up with the young boys!" In light of his increasing age, I interpreted his reply as, "Hold up, you young whipper snapper; Hold up one second. This isn't new. Stan Smith is my generation. We were rocking Stan Smith's before you were born." I received that loving admonishment like, "You're absolutely right. I forgot."

It's the same thing when it comes to music. I hear music all the time in my head. I hear the song, "Every step I take, every single day, I'll be missing you." I didn't know that was a cover of the Police. I thought Puff Daddy wrote that song. I thought that was him all day. This is how both music and fashion works. What's fashionable is determined by what's popular. Trends are driven by supply and demand. But it should not be that way in the church when it comes to the truth. The truth of God doesn't go in and out of style. This isn't a trend.

Isaiah 40:8 says, "*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.*" In season and out of season; popular or unpopular; North America or Africa; 21st Century or 1st Century. The Word of God is eternal. It is eternally reliable. It will stand forever which means it will always prove to be true. Verses 20 and 21 say, "*But you [Christians] have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.*" You have the truth. It's the classic, same old truth. He says in verse 24, "It's what you heard from the beginning." It's not new, trendy or something that just popped up. It's the same old ancient, eternal truth. You have the truth.

The analogy given to explain relativism is that it's asking several blind men to examine an elephant. One man touches the trunk of the elephant and says, "This must be a snake." Another blind

man touches the elephant's tusk and says, "This must be a spear," and on and on and on. It's an analogy to say, "All of these religions and cultures all have a perspective of God and we have to pull it all together to figure out Who God is." The fundamental problem with that analogy is that if the elephant starts to talk and says, "I'm not a snake or a spear. I'm an elephant," then those other observations don't matter.

God has spoken! We've actually heard from Him! He loves us so much that He didn't leave us in the dark to figure this out on our own. He didn't leave us in the dark to grope around and try to figure out how to have a relationship with the Creator God. He didn't leave us in the dark to figure out what happens in the afterlife and how to get on the good side of the afterlife. No! God has spoken and as it states in Hebrews 1, He has spoken most clearly in His Son, Jesus Christ. He has equipped you with His Word and His Word is reliable. He has equipped you with His Spirit. If you are in Christ, He has given you His Spirit. He says in verse 20, "*You have been anointed by the Holy One.*" You have been anointed! When you look at the background and read the gospels, you see Jesus Himself over and over again. It says, "He was anointed by the Spirit."

In the second half of 1 John He promises His disciples, "When I leave, I will send you a Helper, the Holy Spirit. He will guide you with all truth." He says, "You have been equipped with the Holy Spirit, the One of Whom the Apostle Paul says, 'the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives in you.'" The same Spirit Who spoke to and through the apostles so that the Word of God has been recorded—that same Spirit Who is the Author of Truth—lives inside of you.

What an amazing privilege, honor and opportunity for us to cultivate intimacy with God as we engage the Holy Spirit that lives inside of us. If you're not a Christian, God doesn't just leave you alone. He doesn't just forgive your sins. He doesn't even just leave you after you're forgiven to try to change yourself. He gives you the power of His Holy Spirit to begin to change you from the inside out, leading you in living out this amazing truth of the gospel that He has revealed in His Word.

He says in verse 26 and 27, "The anointing that you've received from Him abides in you and you have no need that anyone should teach you." As His anointing teaches you about everything and is true, abide in Him. Does this mean we don't need pastors and Bible teachers? Did you just waste the last 41 minutes of your life? The budget for 2019 is coming up, so should we just take my salary off the roles? (Please, for the sake of my children, don't do that.) John is not saying that we don't need teachers. He is teaching them and writing them a letter for that very purpose. Jesus and the apostles clearly taught that Christians need godly qualified teachers to help people understand and apply God's Word. We talked about that in depth during the twelve traits of the Biblical church when we preached about biblical preaching and teaching.

When John says, "Because you have the Spirit, you don't need anyone to teach you," he's saying, "You don't need anyone to teach you something new." When it comes to Jesus and eternal life, you don't

need them to teach you anything more than what you've already heard in the gospel. Jesus has revealed Himself and eternal life in the gospel. You have what you need in order to have assurance and confidence that you can be forgiven, reconciled to God and have eternal life with God. Satan wants to deceive you, but Jesus has equipped you.

If you know people who have walked away from the faith, the same word from Christ and the same Spirit of Christ that grounds you, transforms you and works in you is the same Word and the same Spirit that is needed in order for them to be born again and see the glory of Christ—that He wasn't just a moral teacher or social revolutionary or whatever, but that He was the Son of God, embodied on earth Who came for the salvation of sinners. So you pray and ask, "Holy Spirit, would You work?" And you be courageous, and you be faithful to share the Word of the gospel with them. Don't try to convert them; you don't have that power. Just trust that as you display the love of Christ and share His truth, that God, by His Spirit, will work in His time.

#3 – Eternal life awaits you.

"Abide in the Word (verse 24) and abide in His Spirit (verse 27) because eternal life awaits you." Satan wants to deceive you; Jesus has equipped you and eternal life awaits you. He says in verses 24 and 25, "If what you've heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. You will have this unfathomable relationship with the triune God." Verse 25 says, "This is the promise He has made to us: eternal life."

John is saying that it's worth the fight. I know you're struggling with doubt and sometimes have a hard time thinking about what the exclusivity of Jesus means. What does that mean for people around the world who've never heard of Christ? What does that mean for my family members who have already died who weren't Christians? I know that's difficult to wrestle with, but God, through John, says to us, "Hang in there. Hold on to Christ. The gospel that you've received and believed is true. It is true! Hang in there and trust Me! Keep clinging to the gospel. Keep abiding in Me by the Spirit." Eternal life is waiting. The day that all of our longings point to, the day when there will be no more suffering, no more cancer, pain, tears, anxiety, no more feeling like God is distant. He will dwell among us and will be as close and intimate as your very breath. You will no longer have to wrestle with those doubts because you won't see Him by faith anymore; you'll be able to see Him by sight, face to face!

Having trusted Him, all the questions and struggles in this life may be on your mind, thinking, "All right, God. I'm going to give You this one because I trust that You're wiser than me and have worked this thing out according to Your own wisdom." You've trusted Him and are clinging to that truth. When you're with God face to face, all things will be made clear. Eternal life awaits you!

Jesus says to us, "I've come that You might have life and that you might have it to the fullest, not just in this life, but that the joy of abundant life would extend for all of eternity."

Let's come back to the question I started with: Who is Jesus to you? Do you believe in this Jesus Who has been revealed in His Word? Do you believe in the Jesus, not of pop culture, but the Jesus Who has revealed Himself? Are you ready and willing to bow your knee, to humble yourself, to receive Jesus, to surrender to Him, to put your trust in Him as He truly is? Do you believe that you are made in His image, not that He is made in yours? I want you to have eternal life. If you're a believer, I want you to be confident and have joyful anticipation for the life to come.

Let me pray for us.

Father, I thank You that You have not left us in the dark. The Bible is sometimes hard to understand and agree with in certain places. But You haven't left us in the dark. You've revealed Yourself to us in the Word of the gospel. You've given us Your Spirit to help us understand it and to help our hearts connect to it. That's what I pray for every person here, Lord. Help us in our doubting and wavering. Help us with the temptation to walk away and believe only what we want to believe. Help us see that the gospel is true, Jesus is real and that eternal life is available.

God, we will forever praise Your name. We're going to start right now! We want to praise Your name, Lord Jesus, for all that You've done for us when we did not deserve it and could not earn it. We praise You, Jesus, because You have done what we could not do. To Your name be glory, honor, majesty and power. We pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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