

Doubt

Matthew 11:1-27

#15 in our series "Jesus Stories"

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Message

[During the early portion of this message the worship leader persistently plays "Amazing Grace" in the background as Peter is preaching.]

Recently, it's come to my attention that some church members were struggling with faith, and you can't be saved without faith. So, we're going to deal with it right now.

In 1078 AD the Archbishop of Canterbury, Saint Anselm, presented the ontological argument for the existence of God: Anselm said, "Imagine a being greater than which none can be conceived. Now suppose that being doesn't exist...if you do, that being, greater than which none can be conceived is a being of which a greater can be conceived. That's impossible, so that being greater than which none can be conceived must exist; that being is God. In other words, God's non-existence is inconceivable. It's really a fascinating argument once you get into it.

In the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas presented *The Five Fold Cosmological Argument*. Basically, it says that if you take the sum total of all caused things, there must be an uncaused cause that caused all those things. God is the uncaused cause that caused all those things. God is the uncaused cause—the unmoved mover—necessary beingness. It's a brilliant argument, and if you don't get it, maybe you're not smart enough to get it or get faith.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, William Paley presented the teleological argument: *The argument from design*—the universe is like a watch so there must be a watchmaker.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Immanuel Kant doubted that but formulated the moral argument that is: we sense within us a moral law in the universe. Therefore, there must be a moral lawgiver. Well, if you don't sense the moral law, maybe you're not good enough to sense the moral lawgiver, not smart enough and not good enough to get faith.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, science has basically proven that the entire Cosmos just sprang into existence out of nothing, thus offering empirical evidence for the cosmological and teleological arguments. And physicists have demonstrated that matter is dependent on an observer. So, if we are matter that matters, someone is observing us all.

And of course, even more importantly, we now have vast libraries of ancient manuscripts and historical validation testifying to the fact that God not only existed but died and rose from the grave.

And then, there's personal experience...

(Aaron! Would you stop playing that music!? Can't you see that I'm proving the existence of God do you want people to have faith or not?)

Well anyway, I'm just saying. You gotta be pretty stupid or pretty bad to not believe. And if you don't believe me, just watch this movie.

God's not Dead Trailer

A journalist is shown interviewing a member of the Duck Dynasty family:

Journalist: *What do you say to people that are offended by your show because you pray to Jesus in every episode?*

Willie Robertson from Duck Dynasty: *If we disown him, he'll disown us.*

A professor speaks:

Professor: *When a twelve year-old watches his mother dying of cancer... a good who would allow that is not worth believing in . Life is really a tale told by an idiot full of fury and signifying nothing!*

The professor is then shown in a classroom challenging his students to write the words "God is Dead" on a paper and sign it. One of the students is uncomfortable with this challenge and says he is not able to do this. The professor says, *"If you can not bring yourself to admit that God is Dead, then you will have to prove the antithesis."*

A discussion between this student and his pastor is shown.

The student is told by his pastor: *"acceptance of this challenge may be the only meaningful exposure to God and Jesus they'll (other students) will ever have."*

The student says, *"To me he's not dead. I don't want anyone to get talked out of believing in him just because this professor thinks they should."*

The scene changes back to the university classroom and the professor says to this student: *"Mr. Wheaton, are you ready?"*

Music begins: **"MY GOD'S NOT DEAD; HE'S SURELY ALIVE. HE'S LIVING ON THE INSIDE ROARING LIKE A LION!"**

The student is shown defending his faith in front of his classmates and then confronting his professor: *Science supports his existence; you know the truth! Why do you hate him? It's a very simple question!! Why do you hate God?*

Music plays: **"MY GOD'S NOT DEAD; HE'S SURELY ALIVE. HE'S LIVING ON THE INSIDE ROARING LIKE A LION!"**

YEAH! Take that Kevin Sorbo! You're not so tough now...are ya Hercules?

James 1:6

The doubting man is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind, for that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways will receive anything from the Lord.

Well, now that we've got that settled, let's read our text. (This occurs just a little before the story we read last week, wherein John the Baptist was beheaded by King Herod.)

Matthew 11:2-19

Now when John heard, in prison, (John's in prison) about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

Yikes! John the Baptist just doubted Jesus the Christ. John isn't stupid or immoral, but he doubted. And just think: John is Jesus' cousin; he would've heard the stories of Jesus' miraculous birth. He saw the Spirit descend on Jesus like a dove. He heard the voice from Heaven say, "*This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.*" Scripture says that he was "filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb." He was so devoted to God he gave up everything to dress in camel hide, eat locusts, and prophecy in the wilderness, and he, John the Baptist, doubted. Jesus must be very offended!

Verse 4:

And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.

Jesus answered, but it's not really an explanation or argument, actually, John already knows this stuff. In verse two, we're told that this is what prompted him to ask the question. This isn't an argument so much as a song, a prophetic song from : 4 & 5

Behold your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer.

"Then," see? By quoting Isaiah 35 and saying, "Healing is now, grace is happening now," Jesus is saying, "The vengeance of God is happening now through me. That's some weird vengeance.

Verse 5:

The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended.

"Not offended"—scandalizo—scandalized.

What a strange thing to say. Who would be scandalized by such free and rampant grace? Well, how about John? John is in prison soon to be beheaded.

If I'm John, I'm thinking, "Cousin! That's great about the blind, the lame, and the lepers, but I'm in prison...I hear you turned water into wine, but I've never had wine. I hear that you party with tax collectors and sinners, but I've wondered the desert and eaten bugs. That's great about your super powers and amazing grace, but how about a little vengeance on my behalf? Of all people, don't you think I deserve? How about sending a little super powers my way? I worked for you; maybe you could work a little for me

If I were John, I'd be offended. Are you offended?

You know, Isaiah, Peter, and Saint Paul all refer to: "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," as the ultimate *scandelon*—offense to this world. And why is Jesus a scandal? Well, because He's God and just look at Him there, hanging on the tree. Just think how that was for the disciples and Mary. They worked for Him and He went and died on them, and He chose to go to Jerusalem and die.

The disciples fled, but Mary stayed at the tomb...weeping, even though God himself appeared to be dead.

You know, after all I've been through in life, I don't think I do much doubting of God's existence. But sometimes, it feels like He is dead, or at least gone and died on me—"forsaken me."

Well, John of all people doubted and may have been offended. In verse 6, Jesus says,

And blessed is the one who is not offended by me. As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "what did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you." Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.

Wow! John might be offended at Jesus, but Jesus doesn't seem to be offended at John. He says, "No one is greater among those "born of women," which included a lot of folks even Moses and Elijah. And we're pretty sure those guys get into the Kingdom of Heaven because in a few chapters they'll show up on the Mount of Transfiguration with a glowing Jesus. Well, according to Jesus, few, if any, were smarter or better than John the Baptist. And John the Baptist doubted. It seems that Jesus expected the doubt, and even arranged for the doubt.

For some reason, we Christians make it sound like faith is the result of good behavior or figuring out some difficult equation. It's why I used to wonder why all the smart people weren't Christians. It's why I used to feel such a burden to prove God's existence. I actually had a teacher in High School a lot like Kevin Sarbaro, in the movie. Years later, I now realize that all of his arguments against God contained fatal flaws. But it's not like some proof would've convinced him.

So , I used to wonder:

Why doesn't God provide a watertight proof for His own existence?

Why do I seem to be more concerned with proving God's existence
than God is concerned with proving God's existence?

Why doesn't Jesus appear to all doubters

the way He appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus?

Boom: "How about that Richard Dawkins a glowing floating Jesus!"

Why didn't Jesus come down off the cross when the Pharisees said,
"If you're the Christ come down."

And why didn't He appear resurrected before Herod, Pilate, and the Roman Senate...
instead of before weeping Mary standing outside His tomb?

Honestly, in the gospels, it's like Jesus goes out of His way to make sure that no one *has* to believe, but that there's always room for doubt. You know what I mean? In places Scripture says He would not (or could not) perform a sign, for they did not believe. I would think He'd perform the sign so they would believe or could believe. But He acts like the sign might keep them from believing, the way He wants them to believe.

As if: "*Blessed are those who haven't seen and yet believe.*"

As if, that really matters to Him.

As if He wants us to believe because we really want to believe.

As if He wants us to want to believe.

Karl Barth wrote:

Note well: In all the Bible, of the Old and New Testament, not the slightest attempt is made to prove God." And think about this: If you did prove God (in your personal laboratory), if you proved God, would that be God? And if you tried to prove God, what would you prove Him with? Reason?

Scripture says that God is reason (*Logos* is how you say it in Greek). So asking, "Is the existence of God reasonable" is asking, "Is the existence of Reason reasonable?" God is the Truth. So asking "Is God true?" is asking "Is truth true?"

To ask: "Does God exist?" is to assume the answer. He is existence. He is "AMness"— "I am that I am." So, how could I ever prove God? And yet...we all assume God. In fact, we have to assume God just to doubt God. You have to assume truth and existence just to ask: "Is it true that God exists?"

Actually, you have to assume God to doubt anything...

To doubt what's true you have to believe in truth.

To doubt what's real you have to believe in reality.

To doubt what's good you have to believe in the good.

To doubt nothing, in this world, is to be inhuman.

To doubt everything is utterly insane, for then you have nothing to doubt with.

If I say, "Doubt everything,"

Then I must doubt that I should "doubt everything," which is believe something.

If I say, "Well you never know" then I obviously don't know that you never know.

If I say, "There is no truth" then that statement is untrue and there is truth.

Maybe, to doubt everything is to be the doubting man that James talks about; the doubting man makes doubt into his God. He doubts in order to protect himself from the Truth, in order to kill the Truth, which is to crucify Jesus, for Jesus is the Truth. He doubts because he doesn't want to believe. But if you doubt because you want to believe, that's called "seeking the truth," and Jesus is the Truth. He said, "*Seek and you will find,*" perhaps because you already have been found. That kind of doubt is a little truth in you seeking more truth because you want Truth, it's wanting to believe the Truth.

All that to say, maybe the real issue isn't whether or not you're smart enough to believe the Truth or good enough to believe the Truth, but do you want to believe the Truth? Maybe God arranges all things so that you might doubt the truth, so that you wouldn't *have* to believe the Truth, so that you might *want* to believe the Truth. Maybe the Truth plays "hard to get" so we'd fall in love with the Truth the way the Truth has already fallen in love with us.

In other words, the real issue is not proving that “God’s not Dead,” but *wanting* God to be alive when it appears that He *is* dead.

Earlier this week, I watched that movie: *God’s Not Dead*. It was profoundly cheesy, but it made some good points, and it turns out that the professor didn’t believe because he didn’t want to believe, because he was offended at God, for when he worked for God, God didn’t work for him.

In the end, a car hits him, and as he’s dying, the pastor tells him to believe so he’ll get into Heaven and won’t go to Hell. So he says, “I believe in Jesus,” and yet, I think he was terribly offended at Jesus. If you believe in Jesus because you have to, because you lost an argument or want to get into Heaven, I don’t think you believe in Jesus; you’re actually offended at Jesus; you want everything *but* Jesus. You’re using God, but you don’t trust His heart—who Jesus is. When we argue people into Heaven or scare people into Heaven, I think we may keep them from Heaven, for they remain offended with Jesus.

So Jesus sends word to John in prison saying...

“Blessed is he who is not offended at me, by me, in me, with me.”

“Blessed is he who likes me and not just what I can do for Him.”

“Blessed is the woman who sits outside my tomb and weeps for me,
not offended at me, who wants me,

even when I can do nothing for her, even when I am dead.”

You know, John’s not asking, “Does God exist?” That’s an absurd question. John is asking, “Is Jesus the Revelation of God’s heart? And if so, do I like Him?”

John is asking Jesus, what Jesus is asking John:

“John, are you offended at me?”

“John, I make blind people see, deaf people hear.

I set captives free who don’t deserve to be set free, and you are still in prison.

Do you like me?”

“John, I create and sustain all things, and yes that’s me in the tomb.

Do you still want me when I seem weak?”

“John, do you love Love when there’s no other reason to love Love?”

“John do you love me when I’m dead; for then John, you will have loved me in freedom

And then you will love me like Mary on Easter morning,

When you’re mourning turns into dancing...dancing in perfect freedom.”

“Do you love me?”

One of my favorite books is *In God’s Underground* by Richard Wurmbrand. He spent fourteen years in Romanian prison cells for his faith in Christ. Toward the end they brainwashed him. They locked him in a room with a loudspeaker. For days it blasted this message over and over: “Christianity is dead. Nobody loves you.” In time, he came to believe what they said. And then he thought of Mary, how she heard Jesus cry, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” And then how she wept outside of his tomb. So, when he believed Christianity was dead, he would say to himself: “Even so, I will believe...and I will weep at its tomb until it rises again, as it surely will.” Wurmbrand said, “Christianity,” but Christianity is really the body of Christ.

Well, for years, I was offended at how Wurmbrand ended his book, but I don’t think Jesus was offended, for Wurmbrand and Mary of Magdalene wanted Jesus when Jesus didn’t work for them. They wanted Jesus . . . just Jesus.

Well, in order to truly believe, I think we will each have an appointment with doubt. After seeing God work, and bless, and even do miracles, we will each have to spend some time in that cell with John the Baptist, and a choice will have to be made: Do we want Jesus? Do we want to believe in Jesus . . . just Jesus?

Fredrich Buecher writes: "Without somehow destroying me in the process, how could God reveal himself in a way that would leave no room for doubt? If there were no room for doubt, there would be no room for me."

What is me?

I don't know quite how to say this but the older I get, the less I doubt God's existence and the more I doubt my existence. I mean, I wonder: "Who am I?" or "What am I?" I'm Peter Hiatt born of Eve and Evelyn. I'm flesh and blood with a resume of good deeds and bad deeds. I'm an old me that's fragile and fading away, and yet, I'm a new me that's Faith, Hope, and Love. Each is a choice—not made by me—but made *in* me—a choice that is me. (I don't know if I said that right.)

Well, Jesus goes on in verse 11:

"Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

What a thoroughly bizarre thing to say. In a little while Jesus will say, "*You must become like a child to enter the kingdom,*" and "*of such is the kingdom of Heaven.*" Matthew 18:3 and 19:4

Jesus just told us John wins the holiness race. He is the very best of "those born of women." He is the pinnacle of the law and the prophets. What can a child do better than John the Baptist?

Verse 12:

"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force."

Well, men of violence had just tried to take the kingdom by taking John by force. Soon they'll take King Jesus by force. The sons of Adam take the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by force. The experts in the law, that's the knowledge of good and evil, take Jesus by force, nail Him to a tree by force; they take His body broken and blood shed by force.

Maybe we all try to take the Kingdom by force. We work for God so He'll have to work for us. We try to fulfill the law so God has to give us His Kingdom. We think: "You have to bless me King Jesus, for I fulfilled the law and the prophets."

No one had more right to say that than John the Baptist. Yet, Jesus says in John 10:8 "*All who come before me were thieves and robbers.*" (That would include John.) So Jesus claims that John was the very best of all the thieves and robbers, but still a thief and robber.

Verse 12:

"The violent take the kingdom by force for the prophets and the law prophesied..."

The prophets and law made them try to take the Kingdom.¹ But the prophets and law prophesied.

¹ It's actually because of the law and prophets that the violent try to take the kingdom by force "The law came in to increase the trespass" writes Paul.

Get that? They prophesied. That means the law wasn't about the law, and the prophets weren't about the prophets.

The whole Old Testament was about something else. Like every law and prophesy was a note in a song, and until you hear the song you can't understand the meaning of the notes. So, you might take a note and play a note, but have no clue as to the song. Actually, you would've crucified the song by taking the note.

Well, Jesus says, *"All the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

I guess John didn't always have "ears to hear" because in John 1:21, John the Baptist says, "I'm not Elijah," and Jesus clearly says, "He is Elijah who is to come." Maybe there's a John who didn't hear the music and didn't know who he was, and a John who heard the music and became who he was. Maybe there's a Peter Hiett born of women, and a Peter Hiett who is to come.

Well, in verse 11, Jesus said, *"There's none greater among those born of woman (than John)"* Yet, the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John. Well, maybe John isn't only "born of women," but John is, or will be, "born of the Spirit."

Jesus said to Nicodemus, *"Unless one is begotten from above he cannot see the kingdom."* (He's blind to it.) *"That which is begotten of the flesh is flesh, and that which is begotten of the Spirit is spirit..."* So if I'm begotten of the Spirit, I have a man of flesh (born of woman) and a new man of the Spirit, (born of the Spirit).

The man born of woman is Peter Hiett, born of Eve and Evelyn, flesh and bone with a resume. That man born of woman, born of flesh, is the Peter Hiett I think I make with my will power and my "knowledge of good and evil." When that Peter Hiett hears that he's "justified by faith," that Peter Hiett tries to make faith, but it's not faith, at least not in God, it's faith in Peter's ability to earn God and capture God.

Well, that Peter Hiett, born of women, is incredibly offended by Grace, free Grace. And I suspect that John the Baptist, born of women, was offended by Jesus. He had heard tales of this amazing grace, but if anyone deserved grace it was John, and yet Grace deserved isn't Grace. So that John, born of women, would've been offended by Grace. He couldn't actually see Grace and was incapable of faith in Grace.

That John needed to die. In fact, John himself said, *"Jesus must increase and I must decrease."* John said that, but I wonder which John said that? Maybe John was born of woman and born of the Spirit. You know, when we cry "Abba Father," it's the Spirit of Christ in us bearing witness with our Spirit that we are children of God, begotten from above, begotten with Seed. *"Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."* Jesus is the Word and the Word is a seed, and He takes root in our soul. *"We are saved by Grace through faith, and this Faith is not of ourselves, that none should boast."*

Well, John the Baptist, born of women, would be scandalized by Grace, but John the Baptist born of the Spirit would have Faith in Grace, and Faith by Grace.

Faith is a gift of the Spirit.

Faith in me, is Christ Jesus begotten in me.

Faith is not a work you can be proud of, but a gift you must be grateful for.

Faith is divine. It's not an equation that you are smart or good enough.

Faith is what Adam and Eve lacked.

Faith is what Jesus gives.

Faith is the creation of God through the power of His Word.

Faith is not a choice I make, but the choice Christ Jesus makes in me.

The moment I become proud of faith, I lose faith.
The moment I become proud of faith, I lose faith.
I crucify the Messiah and I cannot love, for I'm offended by Grace; I can't trust Grace.

So, what is it that children can do better than the greatest man born of women?

Children can trust Grace.
Children can receive gifts.
Children can believe.
Little children are not self-conscious.
Little children can lose themselves because they don't have much self to lose.
Little children can weep, and little children can dance.

Verse 15:

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. But to what shall I compare this generation. It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn."

What's wrong with children like that? They sound self-controlled and grown up.
If we're to be born again, we must be born as children.

We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn." For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds (children in some ancient manuscripts). "Wisdom is justified by her children," said Jesus.

Robin Jones Gunn writes:

She stood a short distance from her guardian at the park this afternoon, her distinctive feature revealing that although her body blossomed into young adulthood, her mind would always remain a child's. My children ran and jumped and sifted sand through perfectly coordinated fingers. Caught up in fighting over a shovel, they didn't notice when the wind changed. But she did. A wild autumn wind spinning leaves into amber flurries.

I called to my boisterous son and jostled my daughter. Time to go. Mom still has lots to do today. My rosy-cheeked boy stood tall, watching with wide-eyed fascination the gyrating dance of Down's syndrome girl as she scooped up leaves and showered herself with a twirling rain of autumn jubilation.

With each twist and hop she sang deep, earthy grunts-a canticle of praise meant only for the One whose breath causes the leaves to tremble from the tree.

Hurry up. Let's go. Seat belts on? I start the car. In the rearview mirror I study her one more time through misty eyes. And then the tears come. Not tears of pity for her. The tears are for me. For I am far too sophisticated to publicly shout praises to my Creator. I am whole and intelligent and normal, and so I weep because I will never know the severe mercy that frees such a child and bids her come dance in the autumn leave.

I think that dance is called faith.

Faith isn't comprehending God.

Faith is being comprehended *by* God.

All sorts of biologists and meteorologists comprehend the wind and the autumn leaves, but they won't dance in the autumn leaves.

Faith isn't comprehending the Reason.

Faith is being comprehended by the Reason.

Faith isn't comprehending the Music.

Faith isn't surrendering to the Music...

It's hearing the music and starting to dance.

Faith is not conquering the Truth, it's being conquered by the Truth.

Faith is not seizing control,

but surrendering control to the Word of God that upholds all things."

Faith is losing yourself in the music, and then finding yourself dancing.

The dance is love and God is Love.

Faith is freedom.

Robin Gunn writes:

"I will never know the severe mercy that frees such a child and bids her come dance in the autumn leaves"

Well, I wouldn't be so sure Robin. John the Baptist met the severe mercy. It was the Grace of God in Christ Jesus: "John I give sight to the blind. I make the deaf hear. I forgive sinners, and I release captives, and you're a captive even though your works are the greatest of those born of women. Are you offended? Is your pride offended? For proud people can't dance...but little children dance.

Are you offended?

It was Grace that offended. It was gifts given to those considered least deserving and not given to those considered most deserving. The prison was Grace. The doubt was Grace. Jesus' words were Grace. That Grace must've offended and killed John's old man, and must've given birth to his new man, a child, the child of faith.

Actually, I bet it was John's New Man that caused him to surrender his old man. It was His Faith that caused him to surrender his doubts. Never hide your doubts; always confess your doubts to Jesus, who is the Reason. You're probably not doubting God. You're doubting your perception of God—your old self. And doubting your old self makes room for your new self.

Room for doubt makes room for faith, which is room for me, the new me, the free me, created by Amazing Grace.

I think John the Baptist knew the severe mercy in the words of Christ, and every week you know the severe mercy. The table of our Lord is severe mercy. Every week, you see Jesus Christ and Him crucified—body broken and blood shed. And you can't earn Him, buy Him or control Him. You can't comprehend Him, but He will comprehend you.

It can be really good to work through all the philosophical, theological, and historical arguments for the existence of God, and the veracity of the gospel. But realize that you cannot comprehend God. God must comprehend you, and that's called Faith.

But battling doubt and nurturing faith is not a matter of winning arguments. It's more like hearing a song (that constantly plays all around you), and joining the song called the gospel. It's like the poet once said,

And it whispered that soon, if we all call the tune,
Then the piper will lead us to reason.
And a new day will dawn for those who stand along.
And the forests will echo with laughter.

Reason is not a small thing that you can comprehend.
Reason is the fabric of reality—the Amazing Grace of God.
Reason is Jesus, and Jesus is the Piper, and Jesus must comprehend you, and that's called Faith.

So, you're like Mary, actually you *are* Mary. You're the Bride of Christ. Who does He want to marry? YOU! Each week you come sit outside the tomb, and He does not offend you. So blessed are you. You're mourning will turn into dancing.

Communion

This is the judgment of God. Whatever is offended at this is cursed, and will remain cursed until it's not offended or ceases to exist. And whatever is not offended is blessed and eternal; it's who you really are

Close your eyes.

Maybe you feel like John the Baptist in prison. You've worked for Jesus and now Jesus isn't working for you. He blessed people that don't deserve to be blessed. Are you offended? That which is offended in you is not you; it's the false you. It's dead. That which is not offended is the eternal and true you.

Look! Why is He broken and bloodied? He's broken and bloodied for you John the Baptist, Peter Hiett, and Sanctuary attendee. He's dying with you that He may rise in you, even now, as Faith. John look! Are you offended? That which is offended in you is not you; it's the false you; it's dead. Look at it and let it be dead. That which is not offended in you is eternal. John Look! He weeps and mourns with you, that you would forever laugh and dance with Him. God in Christ Jesus died, but He didn't stay dead. He is Amazing Grace.

The Day of Judgment is the day that God is revealed and God asks, "Are you offended?" "Blessed are you that are not offended at me."

Benediction

Whatever is offended in you at the Grace of God is fading, it will pass away, so don't believe it just let it go. Whatever is not offended in you, whatever answers this with faith, and hope, and love, well that is you. It's not just you. Scripture says that our spirit becomes one with His Spirit. God is revealing who you eternally are in space and time.

Who are you? You are faith, hope, and love. You are choices that He makes in you throughout your life. Everything is different because you have faith in a different situation; you have hope in a different situation; you have love in a different situation, and: *"He who loves is born of God and knows God."*

Maybe you doubt God and maybe you doubt yourself, but during this message you surrendered your doubts. That's the place that God is filling you with faith, and you will never stop dancing because although God died, He didn't stay dead, He's alive! And He's alive in you, His body, His dancing body. In Jesus' name believe! Amen.

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