

Though We Do Not See Him, We Love Him

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[0:00] 1 Peter 1, verse 1. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade, kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this, you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, while you have had to suffer grief and all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

[1:59] It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

Even angels long to look into these things. I remember hearing once of a young person who had been convicted of their sin and convinced of their need for Jesus.

And when he heard a preacher say, run to Jesus, he asked, but where do I run? And you could see him, his legs churning and running, but not knowing where to go.

Not knowing what that preacher meant when he said, run to Jesus. And maybe you have had the same question. You've heard preachers say things like, flee to Christ.

Flee from the wrath to come. Go to the cross. Go to Jesus. And you think, if I just knew where Jesus was, I would go. And that's natural. We're people with five physical senses.

[3:13] And we prefer things that we can taste and touch and smell and hear and see. That's who we are. That's how God has made us.

If Jesus was down the street at Woody's, I could flee to Him there. Tell me where He is and I can go. If the old rugged cross was out back in the field here, I could go cling to it.

But Christianity is different. Our hope of salvation is firmly fixed to something that we cannot see, hear, taste, smell, or touch.

We need a sixth sense, as it were. Not the ability to see dead people. The sixth sense, rather, is faith.

And the object of our faith is not dead, but very much alive. So we want to think today about the ability that we have to love and to have faith in something that we have never seen.

[4:24] And so, three simple points this morning. One, some things you can see and some things you can't. Secondly, you can love and believe in things that you've never seen.

And then thirdly, there's great joy and salvation and loving and believing in the unseen Christ. I'm going to focus on verses 8 and 9 this morning.

Notice them again with me. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. And even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

We begin by observing this morning that some things you can see and some you can't. Some things you can see. This is assuming you have your eyesight, which not everyone does, and we understand that.

But if you do, there are some things that you can see. This morning, you can see the people sitting around you. You can see at least part of me, the part that's above the pulpit here.

[5:28] You can see the front of the pulpit. You can see the Bibles that you hold in your hands, the hymnals that we sang from. You can look out the window and see the cars and see that it's not raining at this moment like it was earlier today.

There's all sorts of things you can take in through the eye gate. And that's just from your seat this morning. We could talk all day about things that we see with our eyes every day. At your place of employment, at your school, in your home, as you drive down the road, things that you see. Different settings, different places. But there are other kinds of things that we can see. Peter talks about some of them here in chapter 1. He talks about, in verse 6, about suffering grief and all kinds of trials.

And we're very good at seeing our trials, aren't we? We notice them. When Paul writes to the church at Corinth, he talks about outwardly wasting away and light and momentary troubles.

And you know how he summarizes those things in 2 Corinthians 4:18. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

[6:34] He refers to those light and momentary troubles as temporary things that are seen. We can see our trouble. We can see our trial. You can see the boss coming to tell you that you've lost your job.

And then you can see the level of your bank account decreasing, decreasing, decreasing with nothing to bring it back up. You can see that trial with your eyes. You can see the weakness of your body or that of a loved one under a temporary sickness or a prolonged period of suffering.

You can see that trial. You can see the wear and tear from difficult or broken relationships with spouses, children, or friends. You can see the effects of your foolish, sinful behavior and giving in to temptation.

It seems that we have very sharp eyes when it comes to seeing our trials. Some things you can see. Other things, however, you can't see.

You can see part of me that comes above the pulpit this morning, but there's part of me that you can't see because you're blocked by the pulpit. You can't see what's under the pulpit. I can tell you that there's a glass of water, there's song sheets, there's a microphone cord, there's a hymnal here, but you can't see any of those things because of your vantage point this morning.

[7:52] There are things that you can't see. There are also other kinds of things that you can't see. Here, Peter in verse 4 writes about an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade, kept in heaven for you.

It's a heavenly inheritance. You can't see it because it's in heaven. But it's just as real as an earthly inheritance that you can see with your eyes. A physical inheritance.

Paul said it was the inward renewal day by day. The eternal glory. Unseen eternal things. There are spiritual realities that you can't see with your eyes. And the greatest of these is Christ Himself.

And that's obvious, I suppose. We can't see Him. After His earthly ministry, He ascended into heaven. And since then, except for the Apostle Paul, He hasn't been seen on this earth.

And that's the nature of the Christian life for almost everyone who has ever worshipped God, who worships Him now, and who will worship Him on this earth in the future. Before Jesus came, nobody saw Him.

[9:00] Because He hadn't yet taken the form of a man. And so, the patriarchs, the Israelites, didn't see Jesus. And then for 30 some years, Jesus walked on the earth.

And for three of those years in public ministry, a select few people were able to worship Him and see Him at the same time. Peter was one of them.

He talks about being a witness of His sufferings. an eyewitness of His majesty. Peter's different from us. He's different than the people He's writing to. You've never seen Him, but Peter did. And so for a period of time, a few people did see Him.

But then He went back up into heaven, and since then, we do not see Him. We who walk on the earth can't see Him. It's why we are to walk by faith and not by sight.

Because we can't see the object of our faith, Jesus. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, 6 and 7, Therefore, we are always confident. And know that as long as we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord.

[10:02] We live by faith, not by sight. As long as we are at home, as long as we are here on this earth, in these physical bodies, we're away from the Lord who is in heaven.

And therefore, we can't see Him. And so we walk by faith and not by sight. Now the things that you can't see are just as real as the things you can.

Just because you can't see the glass of water here under the pulpit doesn't mean that it's not there.

And just because you can't see Jesus doesn't mean that He is not real. He is.

And so, some things you can see and some things you can't. But secondly, you can love and believe in things that you've never seen. You can believe that the things I've told you are under this pulpit are really there.

You can believe that. You can't see them, but you can believe that they're there. And I can take your faith and I can turn it to sight. There really is a glass of water that was under the pulpit.

[11:03] As long as the person describing the things that you can't see is a trusted person, you can believe that what they tell you is true even though you can't see it. And not only can you believe in such things, you can love them.

I want you to think this morning about the newborn child of a relative who lives far away. Maybe some of you have children that are grown and married and live far away from you.

and maybe they're expecting a child. And when that child's birth draws near, your excitement and anticipation grow.

And you wait by the phone and you wait by the computer for the call or for the email that comes with that first description of that baby that you've never seen.

And then finally, the call comes, the email, hits the inbox that announces the arrival of little Susie Ann who's seven pounds and two ounces and twenty inches long and has lots of dark hair and blue eyes and she looks just a little bit like her mom, we think.

[12:11] Her nose looks like mom's nose. And she's healthy. She's doing well. And on the other end of the phone, you grandparents, your heart melts.

And you believe your son or son-in-law that called. And your heart immediately runs out in love to that grandchild that you have never seen. You've never seen him, but boy, do you love her.

And then you tell your son and your son-in-law to hurry up and email me some pictures or put them on Facebook so that I can see a picture of this baby. And still, that helps, but still, you haven't actually seen the baby in person with your own eyes, but the picture helps.

You get the description. That helps. And the picture helps. And your love grows for that child without ever seeing her. You believe that she was born and you love her.

Even though you haven't seen her. Or think of your own unborn child. My wife is pregnant. She's with child. And I have never seen that baby, but you know what?

[13:17] I believe that it's there. And she believes it even more than I do. And do you know what? I love that baby. Already. I can't wait to see him.

It's another boy. Four boys. But I can't wait to see him. Can't wait to hold him. I love him. And there's, you know, how do you know a baby's there? How do you believe that? Well, there's all sorts of signs.

With some, it starts with nausea in the mornings. And then there's the two little lines on the pregnancy test. And then the doctor confirms that there's a hormone there that's only there and levels like that when you're pregnant.

And he began to believe that there's a child there. And pretty soon, mom's able to feel it moving inside of her. And then pretty soon after that, dad, if he puts his hand at just the right place at just the right time, he can feel it too.

And you believe that it's there and your love grows for that baby that you've never, ever seen. Some may doubt our ability to love an unborn child.

[14:20] But if you've ever had one yourself, you know that you can. You know that you do. If you've ever met parents who've lost an unborn child to miscarriage, you've seen their pain and hurt and suffering, the kind of thing only born by those who have loved and had the object of their love taken away.

Our experience every day tells us that we can love and believe in things that we have never seen. Descriptions, pictures, all sorts of signs that point to these things. We believe in them and we love them. And Peter tells us that this is true of our unseen Savior. While we walk through this life and we're facing these fiery trials that purify us and make us stronger while we're waiting for the return of Christ, these trials that are ever before our eyes, these things that we can see so well.

During that, Peter says, though you have not seen Him, Jesus, you love Him. And even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. Here is one whom we have not seen but we can and we must love Him and believe in Him. And though we've never seen Him, we have descriptions of Him, we have pictures of Him, and there are signs all around that He is real.

[15 : 49] And so let's talk about the descriptions of Him for a moment. And they're found here in His Word. This book is about Jesus. When you read it, you're reading about Him. That's true of the whole book.

Let's focus in for a moment on those four books, the Gospels, that were given so that we might see something of the unseen Savior. His person, His life, and His work that He accomplished on our behalf.

And when we read those Gospels, we learn that Jesus was a man on a mission. On a mission from His Heavenly Father. And when we learn that His mission is saving men from sin, that He came to seek and to save the lost, we love that.

Because we're lost sinners. And we need to be saved. And as we read that description, our hearts run out in love to Him. But is He like so many children?

On an errand from their parents, they go grumbling and complaining because they don't really want to obey. No, we find that our Jesus isn't like that at all. Gladly He comes to the earth.

[16 : 52] He willingly goes to the cross. He lays down His own life. No one takes it from Him. He willingly lays it down for us. And as we see what glory, the glory that He had with the Father before the world, what He gave up to come to this earth, our love grows.

And along the way, we find that He's a loving Savior for all who have faith. He takes time with the poor and downcast. He's willing to come to the sickbed of lowly women, of children who are seemingly insignificant in the big scheme of things, to heal them.

He's willing to associate with leprous outcasts and heal them. He's willing to take demon-possessed and oppressed people and heal them by casting out those demons.

He even gives sight to the blind and makes the lame to walk. He takes little children into His arms and blesses them. And we love this Savior that we read of, don't we?

We love His mercy, His kindness. We love Him when we hear His wise teaching. We love how He handles and deals with His disciples. His disciples who are so fickle.

[18 : 07] Sometimes up, sometimes down, sometimes faithful, sometimes not. Often arguing about who's the greatest. We gasp in amazement as we see Him stooping to wash the feet of those men.

We're thankful that He doesn't reject them when they demonstrate their weak faith or even abandon Him because we know that we have done the same. And our love for Him deepens. And we remember that we love because He first loved us.

And then we begin to find out just how deep our love runs when we see Him suffering at the hands of wicked men all throughout His life but especially at the end. It's almost as though we can feel the blows that fell on Him.

The pain of the thorns that were shoved into His head. spikes being driven through His hands and feet. The agony of trying to breathe while hanging on a cross.

It's an ugly picture but our hearts run out in love as we realize that He hung there in our place. Taking the punishment we deserved, our hearts break for Him.

[19 : 18] And when we discover that He didn't just suffer at the hands of cruel men but that His own Father abandoned Him at the cross. That He poured out His wrath on His Son instead of pouring it out on us.

We are amazed. Our hearts cry out, My Jesus, I have never seen You. But I love You. And I know Thou art mine.

I'm amazed that You would suffer for such a wretch like me, for such a worm. Like me. And we trust Him. And we love Him.

And then our anguished love turns to triumphant joy as we consider what we saw last week at Easter. The resurrection of this Savior from the dead.

This man raised. The grave couldn't keep Him and so now the grave holds no dread for us. And how our hearts grow in love. How we love Him though we haven't seen Him.

[20:19] How right Peter is though you have not seen Him. You love Him. I hope that when you read the Gospels, your heart is filled with love for the Savior. But we don't just have descriptions, do we?

We've got pictures of Jesus. And I don't mean artists' renditions of what Jesus might have looked like. Tall, dark, handsome, long, flowing hair and beards.

We don't need those. He's given us His Word that paints vivid pictures for us, but then He's given us the Word made visible. And the two sacraments, the two ordinances of the church, baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

And we've just recently observed both of those and I won't dwell there, but don't we love what we see of Jesus in those pictures? We love how we die and are buried with Him and are raised to newness of life with Him and how our sins are washed away by His blood and how He gave His body and blood for us at the cross.

We love what we see of Him in the pictures that God has given. And then there are signs of Him everywhere. Just like there are signs that my wife is pregnant and that there's a baby there.

[21:28] There are signs that Jesus is there even though we cannot see Him. We find that everything He was that we read about in the Gospels, everything that He was when He was here on the earth, He still is.

He hasn't changed. Same today as He was yesterday. It's not just stories about Jesus that make us love Him. We see in our own lives and the lives of others around us that He's the same today as when He walked on the earth.

Have you found Him in your life to be loving and merciful? Not that you just read about His mercy to someone else, but haven't you found it in your own life? He's still seeking and saving the lost.

You know that because He found you. He's still healing the sick. He's still walking with His people side by side through the fire of their trouble and trials, not leaving them or forsaking them even though they've been unfaithful to Him.

Signs of Him everywhere we look. Has your love for Him grown as He intercedes for you, praying for you by name before our Heavenly Father? You found peace within because He's forgiven your sins.

[22:35] He's still in the business of forgiving sinners. Even sinners who mistreat Him like His disciples did. We fall time and again, but He's still in the business of receiving us back.

You can look to Christ every day and find fresh grace, fresh forgiveness, fresh confidence that you belong to Him and He won't abandon you. We look around and we see hopelessly lost causes being plucked out of the muck and mire of their sin and brought to Christ and we're convinced that this Jesus that we can't see is real.

We look around and we see ordinary people enduring extraordinary trials and burdens and we know that it's only possible in the power of Christ. We're amazed at what we see.

We can't see Him, but we do see signs of Him everywhere. And from what we see, we love Him.

Not as we should, but we do love Him, don't we? Has your love grown cold?

I can't see Him. It's hard for me to love something that I cannot see. Sometimes our love does grow weak. Well, warm your love.

[23:46] Get back into this book that so clearly portrays Christ to us. Read the descriptions of them there that we've just summarized this morning. Read those Gospels again and marvel at His glory.

Take a close look at your own life again and remember that were it not for the grace of God through Christ in your life, you wouldn't be here today. Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come and I've come this far because of Jesus.

His grace has brought me safe this far. The grace of God shown to me in Christ and grace will lead me home. That will warm your heart again to love Him, thinking on what He has done for you.

Read of Christ. Read of His sufferings, His agony in Gethsemane, and take that burning ember that's about to go out of your love room and fan it into flame at the cross. Take some time with someone else who is suffering and see the work of Christ in their life, sustaining them through deep, deep trials, and have your love warmed.

I was privileged to spend just maybe a half an hour with the pools on Friday and to see their faith in the midst of great difficulty and to see their confidence that God is doing all things well and how they see His timing and the different things that have happened with their little girl.

[25:06] Did my heart good? It reminded me of who Jesus is and how He sustains His people. My heart's warm to love. Spend some time with somebody that's suffering and see how Christ is working in them.

Don't neglect the sacraments of the church. It's there that Christ comes and strengthens and feeds our faith and deepens our love. If we're going to have the Lord's Supper, you be here to partake. It's an essential part of strengthening our faith and deepening our love.

We've spoken mostly about loving Him. Let's talk for a moment about believing in Him, this One whom we can't see. That's the nature of faith. It lays hold of that which can't be seen. Though we have not seen Him in the past, we love Him.

And even though we do not see Him now in the present, we believe in Him. Just as you believe that there's a song sheet and a hymnal under this pulpit. Even though you can't see Him. Faith lays hold of what isn't seen.

Even without seeing Jesus, you believe in Him. You can believe in Him. You can believe in those things that they're true. And you can cast yourself upon Him and His perfect work.

[26:11] In fact, if you didn't believe those things were true, you wouldn't love Him. The true go hand in hand. If you love Him, it's because you believe everything that we've said here this morning is true about Him.

He is a faithful Savior. He is ready to receive you. He has forgiven your sins. You believe that and so you love Him. But you can believe. You can trust. You can cast yourself upon Him and His perfect work trusting His obedience to be sufficient for you.

Trusting His atoning death to be sufficient to satisfy the wrath of God against your sin. He's your hope for this life and the next. You rest on Him and not on your own good works.

That's what we spoke of at the beginning. When we say run to Christ or flee to Christ, maybe it frustrates you because you can't see Him and you don't know where to go. What we mean is run to Him in faith.

Read of Him in your Bible. Hear Him preached at church. And then trust in Him. Rest all of your hope for eternity in Him. Your hope for forgiveness of sins in Him.

[27:18] And the way you run when we talk like that is that you pray. You go to Him in your prayer. You say, God, be merciful to me, the sinner. I need Your grace.

I need the shed blood of Christ. I need Him to take my place. I need His righteousness. That's running to Jesus in faith. It's praying to Him.

So though you can't see Him with your physical eyes and you can't go to a physical place where He is, you can believe in Him. You can go to Him in prayer confessing your sin and confessing your trust in Him and in Him alone.

Do it right now. You know what? You can run to Jesus without ever getting out of your seat. And so if you've never done that, run to Him now. At this moment, God, forgive me.

Be merciful to me, the sinner. You can believe in Him and love Him even though you've never seen Him. And He is worth your love and your faith.

[28:16] I hope He's just as real to you though you can't see Him as your trials and struggles are real to you, which you can see. And isn't that what we often look at first?

Our trials and our struggles. I hope Jesus is just as real to you. He's the one able to get you through those things. He's the one able to take you safely home to heaven. Most importantly, He's the one who will forgive your sins that you might be right with God.

Do you love Him? Do you believe in Him? I hope so. So some things you can see and some you can't. You can love and believe in something that you've never seen or someone that you've never seen.

And finally today, there's great joy and salvation in loving and believing in the unseen, Jesus Christ. You're filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy for you receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

There's great joy in that love of an unseen child, isn't there? And we find this of those grandparents who still haven't seen their unborn child. Their children live far away and so they haven't been able to see that grandchild yet, but they are still joyful about it.

[29:27] They love Him and they find joy in Him. Just this past week, on Tuesday, I had lunch with several pastors from the area. And one of them is an elderly gentleman.

And the first thing out of his mouth, I said, how are you doing? And he said, overwhelmed. I just kind of looked at him and he said, my fourth great-grandchild was born.

Not just grandchild, great-grandchild. And this man was positively joyful at the birth of his fourth great-grandchild. Never seen him. He lives in North Carolina.

Hadn't seen him. Seen pictures of him. Heard his grandchild describe his great-grandchild, but he'd never seen him. And he loved that great-grandchild and he was so joyful.

He was the first one there. And then I got there. And then you know what? With every other guy that came, the first thing out of this man's mouth was, I had my fourth great-grandchild this week.

[30:23] He was joyful. He was glad. He was excited. I was amazed. The last guy that got there, it actually took him several minutes to tell him. It wasn't the first thing with the last pastor that arrived.

But eventually, he told him to. He was so happy at the birth of his great-grandchild. He had joy and he expressed it with his words.

Now for a moment here, I'm going to attempt the impossible. I want to tell you about joy that's inexpressible. That means you can't express it.

You can't describe it with words. We read that we're filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

Literally, it's, we are exceedingly glad with inexpressible and glorious joy.

It's a word that we find a lot in the Psalms that he's exceedingly glad. And I love this. We find it in John 8, verse 56, where we read, Your father Abraham rejoiced, was exceedingly glad at the thought of seeing my day.

[31:21] He saw it and was glad. And I think that's so neat because Abraham lived way before Jesus ever came, but you know what? He had joy in the unseen Savior. He thought about my day and he was glad.

Now we're in a different period of time. We look back. Christ has already come, but we too can be made exceedingly glad in the unseen Savior. And the joy with which we're made glad is described as inexpressible and glorious.

It's joy that can't be manufactured by men or earthly things. There are lots of things on earth that rightly bring us joy. God created them for that purpose and we're to receive them with thanksgiving and joy, but this is something deeper.

It's a heavenly joy. A glorious joy because the source of our joy is our glorious Savior who's in heaven. And if you've experienced this joy, you know what I'm talking about.

It's the burden off your shoulders. Sin's forgiven. It's what Christian in Pilgrim's Progress experienced. When the burden, He's bent over it so heavy.

[32:27] And when the burden finally tumbles off His back at the cross, you remember what He does? If I'm remembering rightly, He leaps for joy. joy. As He's glad.

Inexpressible joy. Because He's receiving the goal of His faith, the salvation of His soul. It defies description with words. It's so great. But it's the joy that comes from knowing we're receiving the goal of our faith, salvation.

And if you know it, or if you've experienced it, you know what I'm talking about. But maybe this morning, your joy, maybe like your love, has grown cold. You don't see that joy anymore.

Again, what you're seeing is trials and troubles, and they're weighing you down. If you don't have joy, see if you're not looking for it in the wrong places. Joy does not ultimately come from having a good and comfortable life, a happy family, a secure retirement, and good health.

If God blesses you with those things, they're a source of joy. But if that's your hope of joy, you're going to be sad in this life. Because those troubles are going to come and you're going to say, well, I don't have the thing I wanted that was making me joyful.

[33:35] And then your joy goes down. But see, this joy isn't like that. This is a joy that's fixed on Jesus. Jesus who cannot change. Jesus who is still in heaven.

Forgiving our sins. Walking with us every step of the way. You have Him and the forgiveness of sins. And that should bring true and great joy. And if it doesn't, see if your heart isn't attached to the wrong things and return to Christ and find your joy there.

The reason for it is that we're receiving the goal of our faith. The outcome. The end. The aim of our faith which is the salvation of our souls. And that's what we need.

You remember, Jesus came to seek and to save. And we're sinners. And we need the Savior. We've got a serious problem. Everyone that's ever walked the earth has a serious, serious problem. We've sinned against the Holy God and we deserve judgment and punishment. And that's where we're headed for all of eternity. An eternity apart from Christ. An eternity of torment.

[34:39] And hell. That's a problem. We need to be saved from the penalty and from the power of sin. But that's what Jesus came to do. That's why we believe in Him and the outcome of our believing in Him.

Same word. Faith. The outcome of our faith is the salvation of our souls. So that instead of that eternity of torment and suffering and judgment, we instead have glory and life and gladness and heaven for all of eternity.

And it's not just future. Yes, we're looking forward to an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. Reserved for us in heaven. We are looking forward to the future. But you notice what Peter says.

He says you are receiving. Right now. Present tense. You're receiving the goal of your faith. The salvation of your souls. There are blessings that attend your salvation now.

Right now. You have the Spirit dwelling in you. Right now. You have the power of Christ at work on your behalf. Right now. Your sins are forgiven. You don't have to wait for that until you get to heaven.

[35:39] Right now. You're receiving the goal of your faith. The salvation of your souls. Talk about inexpressible and glorious joy. And until you get to that goal that we're aiming for, heaven, Jesus walking with you every step of the way.

So if you're finding the Christian life to be a drag without joy, then you're not living as God expects us to. He's given us the greatest of all gifts in His Son. We can't whine and complain because our Savior is someone that we can't see.

What a small thing that should seem to us because He's given us such vivid descriptions. Pictures of Him. Signs of Him everywhere as we see Him working. So if you're not finding joy, again, you need your love fanned into flame at the cross.

You need your faith strengthened by the means of grace, the Word of God, those sacraments that we talked about. And when these things happen, your joy will grow. You see here, love and faith and joy go hand and hand in hand.

As your love deepens and your faith is strengthened, your joy in the Lord will grow. Have you ever doubted because you can't see Jesus?

[36:52] It's okay to say that you have, to admit that. I can't see Him. And it's hard for us, maybe, to believe in things that we can't see. There was someone else like that.

His name was Thomas. Thomas. And it was after Jesus rose from the dead. And people had told Him, Jesus is alive. He said, I won't believe until I can put my fingers in His hands, my hand in His side.

And what did Jesus do with him? Did He browbeat him? Did He say, Thomas, you need stronger faith. Thomas, I'm not going to let you touch my fingers, or my hands, or my side.

Because your faith is too weak. You need to believe, Thomas. If you've ever doubted because you can't see Jesus or doubted for some other reason, understand that Jesus isn't going to beat you up and send you away.

He might have a word for you like He did for His disciples. Oh, you of little faith. But you know what He did with Thomas? Come here. Here. Put your fingers in My hand.

[38:01] Here, see My side. Put your hand there. You can see the wound. And He strengthened that man's faith. And so He does with those who are doubting, with those who are weak.

He's able to come alongside you and to encourage you. And Jesus said to him, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

And you know what? If you believe in Jesus today, that's you. Even with your doubts and your questions, if you've had faith in Jesus, there is a blessing for you because you haven't seen Him. Jesus said, blessed are those who don't see and yet still believe.

That's a blessing for you even in the midst of your weak faith. An encouragement for you from our Savior Jesus. What a blessing.

And aren't we finding blessing in believing? Great joy. Salvation of our souls. These things for us. But you know what? One day, one day we will see Him.

[39 : 04] And I can't wait for that day. We're going to see Him face to face. 1 John 3.2 We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

We're going to see Him and we're going to be like Him. And then, believe it or not, our inexpressible joy will be even greater.

Talk about inexpressible joy. This is super inexpressible joy. Because when we see Him face to face, you know what we won't see anymore? We won't see our trials.

We won't see our trouble. We won't see our suffering. Because it's not there. It'll be gone. It'll be done in that day. And we'll see our Jesus.

And we'll have perfect joy. We'll be glad. Let us rejoice. Revelation 19.7 Let us rejoice. Let us be exceedingly glad. And be glad and give Him glory. For the wedding of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.

[40 : 09] And so as great as our joy and love are now, and they should be great, they will be greater when we die. And when Jesus comes again, because we will see Him face to face, then faith will find its fulfillment in sight.

And though we've loved Him, and had inexpressible, we'll say though we loved Him before when we couldn't see Him. And we had inexpressible joy when we couldn't see Him. We love Him even more now. Our joy is even greater in His presence.

Do you remember what the psalmist said? Psalm 1611. You will fill me with joy in Your presence. With eternal pleasures at Your right hand. Or as other translations have it, in Your presence is fullness of joy.

We've got joy now. But when we get to heaven, when we see our Savior face to face, then we'll have fullness of joy. It'll be made complete.

And so as good as we have it now, we have something to look forward to. It will get better. We'll see Him. And we won't see our trouble and trial anymore. And so today, I hope that your inability to see Jesus with physical eyes doesn't keep you from loving Him and doesn't keep you from believing in Him.

[41 : 21] And I hope it doesn't keep you from being joyful in Him. It must not. Let us love and believe with all our hearts that this Jesus is a worthy object of both love and faith.

So as you go through your week this week, you're going to see all sorts of things. You're going to see the difficult things in your life. You're going to walk out of these doors and you're going to find that your trouble at work and your trouble at home, they haven't just vaporized.

They haven't gone away. Those challenges are still going to be there when you leave these doors today. Those things that discourage you and drag you down and consume your time and energy, you're going to see those things.

And you're going to have to deal with them. But as you go, seeing those things, don't forget what you can't see. Don't forget the unseen. Look to Jesus with the eyes of faith and find Him in His Word.

Go to Him in prayer. Express your love to Him. Pray that it would grow. Cast your faith on Him. And pray that it would be a strong faith. In this very tactile, concrete world where we like to have things that we can lay hold of, you lay hold of Christ and you let that unseen Savior be your unmovable rock, your sure foundation.

[42 : 40] Jesus is stronger than any foundation that we can pour on this earth. Firmer than any physical thing we can lay our hands on. And so you put your hope and trust in Him.

And He will give you grace. And if you haven't come to Him yet in faith, you can. I can't point you to a particular occasion, but I can point you to the Scriptures that so clearly reveal to us the mighty Savior.

And I can urge you to trust in Him and His perfect work so that you might be saved from your sins, that you might know something of this love and faith and joy that we've talked about this morning. Run to Jesus today. Do it by faith. Pray to Him that He would save you. And He'll hear you. And He'll answer you. He will receive you. May God make it so.

Well, let's take a moment to pray, to express our faith, our love, to cast ourselves on the Savior. Our Father, we give You thanks this morning that our Savior is seated in heaven, Your right hand.

[43 : 44] Though we cannot see Him, we pray that You would fill our hearts with love and faith and joy. We pray that we would lay hold of Christ by faith.

We pray that as we see the difficult things in our lives, the trials we face, that we would not forget our unseen Savior. We thank You for Him.

We thank You for what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do on our behalf. We thank You that He hasn't changed. And we thank You that You are faithful to us, Your people.

We pray that You would forgive us for our lack of faithfulness, for our doubt, for our weakness. We pray that You would strengthen our faith, deepen our love, and cause our joy to grow ever-increasing until it is full when we are in Your presence.

We pray that You would work this in the hearts of some here who have never trusted in Christ. May they find Him today. We pray that You would reveal Yourself to them, give them that gift of faith that they too might love our Savior, trust in Him, and find joy in Him.

[44 : 50] Do this, that You might receive the glory and that it might be good for us, we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.