

Faith: The Great Receiver

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[0 : 00] The Gospel of John chapter 1, and we're going to read the first 18 verses as we prepare to hear God's word. John chapter 1 and verse 1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was with God. He was with God in the beginning, and through him all things were made.

Without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

There came a man who was sent from God. His name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light. He came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world. And though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

[1 : 12] He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision, or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testifies concerning him.

He cries out, saying, This was he of whom I said, he who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me. And from the fullness of his grace, we have all received one blessing after another.

For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God, the one and only who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

[2 : 21] Last week, I said that according to Isaiah chapter 2, the one thing that is radically wrong with our world is that man is out of place.

And that the Lord is coming again to put man in his place. To establish the right order of things once more, which is the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

And the pride of man will be brought low. That's the way it's supposed to be. And that's the way it will be forever and ever when Christ returns.

Well, what went wrong was sin. And there's nothing more arrogant than sin by which we put ourselves above God. Our thoughts above his.

Our desires and pleasures above his. Our will and way above his will and way. This past week, I was reminded again of our nation's pledge of allegiance.

[3 : 25] When I was a boy, kids, the day began standing beside your desk with your hand over your heart and your eyes looking up at the flag. Pledging.

Promising. Devotion. Allegiance. To that flag. And to the republic for which it stands. One nation. What's the next two words?

Under God. Indivisible. With liberty and justice for all. Now, whether or not we as a nation ever really accomplished that is beside the point that was the right order that was held before us every day of school.

That our rightful place as a nation. And as individuals in that nation is under God. Under his supreme authority.

Under his moral laws. Under his providential care. And ordering of our ways. Under his. but as a nation, we're increasingly abandoning that order and putting ourselves above God.

[4 : 36] So if we don't like his definition of marriage and gender, we just change it with what we like and what we find convenient. And if we don't like his moral laws, we just ignore them and live by our

own truth.

His laws that protect every life made in the image of God, whatever the color of skin, whatever the age, whether in the womb or in the nursing home, precious in his sight.

That law, we just abandon it. We put our laws above God's laws. God's law protecting every man's property, God's command to government, to maintain the rule of law and order in the land.

And instead, more and more on the streets to the highest courts of the land, every man is doing what is right in his own eyes, putting himself above God instead of under God.

And do you know what goes out the window when we no longer put ourselves under God? liberty and justice for all. When man exalts himself above God, makes himself a law to himself, and does what's right in his own eyes, then somebody else will always get the shaft, will not get liberty and justice.

[6 : 11] You see, that's a benefit of living under God, the judge and sovereign ruler of the universe. You can't get rid of the judge and his just laws and still have liberty and justice.

But King Jesus is coming again. And he loves righteousness and justice, and he will judge the world with righteousness and justice. And the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

Alone will be exalted in that day. And the pride of man brought low, even to the lowest hell. But here's the beautiful thing.

Even now, God is putting some men in their place. Some in judgment, others in mercy. For he does have mercy on those whom he will have mercy, the scriptures tell us.

Even now, there are boys and girls, men and women, whom God is emptying of their proud rebellion and bringing in humble faith to Jesus Christ for mercy.

[7 : 21] They're seeing their sin for what it is, how arrogant to put themselves above him. And they're humbling themselves before the Lord and seeking his mercy and finding that he does indeed delight to give grace to those who are humble, saving them from their sins.

Recently, a young man told me that he had been living for himself, making his own plans of what he wanted to do, leaving God out completely. And God scrapped the selfish plans that he was pursuing.

They crashed and burned and came to nothing. And it was a humbling thing, an emptying thing of his self-confidence and self-reliance and self-will.

But through it, God showed him his sin and what he was doing with God by ignoring him and not including him in his life, just living without him.

And so brought low and humble, he cried out to God for mercy. And he found it. For he always gives mercy to those who sincerely seek it.

[8 : 34] And he received the forgiveness of sins and a new life now worth living, God's way, with Christ at the center, with him under God, an abundant life, peace with God, fellowship with God that will never end.

And so looking back, he's now able to say that he's thankful that God emptied him, that he might fill him with himself and his great salvation.

Blessed emptying of ourselves that we might be filled with himself and his saving grace. That's why God empties us. The old hymn, Empty that thou mightest fill us.

He empties us that he might fill us. Remember Gage on stage up here? Suitcases in his hands kept him from receiving all the gifts I had to give him.

But once he dropped what was in his hands, he was then able to receive the gifts. Well, that's the grace of humility and that's its relation to the grace of faith.

[9 : 44] So if we could have the overhead, we're looking at four graces of the Christian life. Critical graces. That triad of graces. Faith, hope, and love plus one.

Humility. And so, we've really pushed you today. We've left four blanks. So let's see how we do together. Humility, the great in the air.

Faith, the great receiver. Love, the great receiver. And hope, the great motivator.

Good for you. Good for you. We're making our way through these graces one by one and we're seeing their interrelation and we'll see that continuing. We come to look more closely at the second grace.

Faith, the great receiver. receiver. I don't know how much football we'll be watching this fall, but there's an offensive player whose position is captured by one word.

[10:46] They're called receivers. And there's good reason for it because the football is thrown to them and they receive it. They don't hike it.

They don't throw it. They receive it. And that one word capsulizes and shows us the main activity of his role on the team.

Receiving. Receiving. And that one word capsulizes the main role of faith in our lives.

Receiving. Now, faith is more than receiving, but nevertheless, faith, the great receiver. So we turn to John's gospel and immediately we're introduced to this amazing person called the word.

He doesn't do as Matthew and Luke and start with the nativity scene. He goes way back before the nativity because he wants us to know that the babe in the of Bethlehem didn't get his start there, but he's from eternity.

[11:54] And so we meet this amazing purpose, this amazing person called the word in the beginning was the word. He was already there.

And the word was with God and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning. We come later in John's gospel to learn that this word is none other than God's own eternal son who is God and was with God the father from all eternity.

And so he was with him there in the beginning of the universe. And so far from himself being created, we're told that it was through him, through this word, this person, the son of God, that through him all things were made and without him nothing was made that has been made.

He's eternal God, the creator of all that exists. And then down in verse 14, we learn that this amazing purpose had an amazing stoop.

For the word became flesh and dwelt among us. He who was from eternity became one of us, took our humanity, a true human being, but in doing so he didn't cease to be God.

[13:18] For John says we've seen his glory and not just any glory. You know, the angels have a certain kind of glory, but that was not the word's glory. No, the word made flesh.

We've seen his glory. It was the glory of the one and only son who came from the father full of grace and truth.

And the rest of the gospel makes plain the reason he became man. The reason he made this stoop was that he might save his rebellious creatures. He might save his condemned sinful man by dying as man in their place under God's curse and wrath so that whoever believes in him would not perish but have everlasting life.

what an amazing stoop. And then we read of the world's amazing rejection of this amazing person.

We might well expect the world to be glad for a savior coming to rescue them from sin and hell.

To receive him with open arms but we're told he was in the world and though the world was made by him the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own but his own did not receive him.

[14:36] They rejected him. They condemned and killed him. The very one who'd come to save them. And then John tells us of some amazing exceptions to this universal rejection.

Verses 12 and 13. Yet to all who received him to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God children born not of natural descent nor of a human decision nor of a husband's will but born of God.

So though the world as a whole rejected him there were some notable exceptions. Who are they?

Notice how they're explained in two phrases two parallel phrases all who received him that is all who believed in his name believing is receiving faith is the great receiver faith receives Christ believing receives Christ as he's offered to us in the gospel and salvation full and free in him and that's something that only those born of God will ever do.

So how can I illustrate the way that faith receives God's gift? It's hard to improve on the illustrations of Jesus and he had a beautiful illustration of this in that talk one night that he had with Nicodemus in John chapter 3 that proud Pharisee who snuck through the darkness and under the cover of night came with his questions for Jesus Nicodemus was a proud Pharisee who was used to thinking that eternal life was something that he could achieve by his own obedience to God's law and Jesus in his opening words to him just knocked the wind right out of his sails you will never see or enter the kingdom of God unless you are born again your nature Pharisee Nicodemus your nature is so bad that you need a whole new start a whole new heart a new birth and this new birth is not something that you can do for yourself you must be born again he took it right out of Nicodemus his hands you see born of God

God must do something to you Nicodemus or you'll never be saved you see it's no can-do religion that Jesus came preaching you're totally helpless Nicodemus you must be born from above by the spirit of God furthermore your sins so condemn you that no amount of your obedience can undo it the punishment coming for them cannot be atoned by your own works but Nicodemus God has so loved this world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life what is this believing to receive everlasting life well Jesus says it's just like Moses who lifted up the serpent in the wilderness and even so me

[18 : 29] I the son of man must be lifted up that everyone who believes in him may have everlasting life John 3 14 and 15 so Nicodemus as Israel's teacher knew numbers chapter 21 very well he knew all about that story Jesus didn't have to explain it to him he understood he searched the scriptures you remember it the Israelites grew impatient along the way in the desert and they grumbled against God and Moses now we might consider that a small sin not God because it was putting themselves above God your agenda God is too slow we want a quicker agenda we don't have patience to wait on you and they were putting themselves above him so God sent poisonous snakes on a mission to bite them the creator said to them go and they obeyed their creator and went and slithered their way into the

Israelite camp and began biting the Israelites and were told that many of them died well they came running to Moses oh we've sinned we've sinned against the Lord we've sinned against you pray that he'll take the snakes away from us so Moses prayed for the people that spoke against him but God didn't take the snakes!

instead he told Moses you make a snake and put it up on a pole and anyone who's bitten can look at it and live can do what?

just this look and live and that's what Moses did he made a bronze snake he put it up on a pole and anyone who was bitten who looked lived how did sinners receive healing from the bite of death by looking at God's one way of deliverance that's it it was a look of faith though wasn't it faith the receiving the great receiver faith receive the healing I don't understand how how looking there will make any difference here in my body no you don't need to you just need to take God at his word and look and live look and live and looking there is always a look away from here because while I'm looking to myself and while I'm attempting home remedies and self improvement I am still perishing there's only life for looking at God's way of salvation looking and living is believing and receiving that's what Jesus says in the same way that Moses lifted up the serpent and whoever looked lived so I must be lifted up so that whoever believes looks in faith believing will not perish but have everlasting life look to me and be saved all you ends of the earth salvation is to be had by a look a look and that's what he's telling Nicodemus it's not by your doing but by believing it's not by your works but by my works you must turn away from yours and look at mine and look at me and trust me put all your hope in me and you will have eternal life me lifted up on a cross dying there in the place of sinners for he was wounded for our transgressions there he was crushed for our iniquities and the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed and healing is to be had for a look a look of faith that receives from

[22 : 57] Jesus Christ eternal life healing but will never turn and trust in his righteousness as long as we're clinging to our own so that's salvation by faith we receive with the empty hands of faith Christ and salvation in him that's how the Christian life begins it begins with the empty hands of faith receiving and I must tell you that that's the way the Christian life continues not just the first step but the last step into your hands I commit my spirit and every step in between it's the look of faith that receives from Christ so I Paul lived the life I live I live by faith in the son of God I live receiving by faith in him who loved me and gave himself for me the new believer soon learns that

God has not laid up a reservoir of grace within her so that she in her need doesn't have to bother Christ for it but has it herself we're not camels that have endless resources great internal reservoirs to draw upon we're rather like leaky buckets a camel may go for many days without water but a leaky bucket needs constant refilling and no sooner have you filled than you find yourself empty again do you keep bumping into your emptiness that's on purpose by God's design he's not put the resources for living the Christian life within us ourselves he's put them in Christ to keep you ever going to him to receive from him you see he would have you as receivers all the way home conversion doesn't make you a self dependent person with your own reservoir of grace rather God has made Christ himself the reservoir of grace for you he's put the grace you need in him so that you'll just keep coming back to him again and again living a life of receiving by faith in him for in

Christ the fullness of deity lives in bodily form and you have been made full you have been given fullness in Christ you see your fullness is not in you your fullness is in Christ who has the fullness of deity in him and that's what John is telling us here in John chapter one about this amazing person he's full of grace and that grace in him is not for himself alone it's it's for me who am constantly finding myself in need of more grace and so he has grace in him for me verse 16

John 1 and so from his fullness have all we what received that's our word for the day from his fullness have all we receive what grace upon grace the reception of grace was not one and done at conversion no we go on receiving one grace after another after another all the way home if you're going to be a Christian you need to get used to receiving for we're never done receiving since he's never done giving for out of his infinite riches in Jesus he giveth and giveth and giveth again and that means you will go on receiving receiving receiving again that's the role of faith in the Christian life it's the great receiver from him and this is the beauty of it you know he's not bothered by our coming to him with our empty hands held out to receive he's rather honored by it he really does delight to give grace to his people if it bothered him he would have given us larger reserves of grace so we wouldn't have to come and bother him so often but he didn't

I think if we had grace for the week given us every Sunday we might not come back to him until next Sunday it's just the way we are so what does he do he says that's not the communion I want with my people that's not the warmth of fellowship that I want with them just once a week coming to me no no I want more than that and so we're broken vessels we're leaky buckets who no sooner receive than we we gotta keep coming again I'm coming again Lord I'm here to receive more grace more grace he loves to give grace to the humble they're the ones he esteems we saw last week they're the ones he looks to with esteem they're the ones he makes his home among those who are humble contrite in heart that's the fellowship he seeks and didn't God teach a similar lesson each morning for 40 years in the wilderness to the children of

[28 : 53] Israel children how much manna were the Israelites to gather each day except for the sixth and seventh day how much were they to gather only enough for that day that day's need that's how much they were to gather and what happened to the who gathered extra for the next day well their jar of manna was full of maggots and it stank it was full of maggots just as their hearts were full of unbelief God didn't give them manna for the week he gave daily bread and was that not meant to build faith and to teach daily dependence upon him and say is that not what the Lord Jesus teaches us in the Lord's prayer what is that fourth petition give us this day enough food for the month we'd like that we'd like to go to

Costco and buy enough toilet paper for the rest of the year and enough food to fill our pantry but that's not how Jesus teaches us to pray give us this day our daily bread and that means I need to come back tomorrow and pray again for daily bread and he's teaching us dependence upon him day by day moment by moment and best of all he wants it that way he delights in having his people come to him we sing these choruses he's all I need he's all I need Jesus is all I need all that I need is in Jesus he satisfies joy he supplies life would be worthless without him all things in Jesus I find he's more than enough for me and we need to remind ourselves of these things everything I lack is found in him and it's in him not just for himself but for us his people answer me it is not the sap in the vine meant to nourish all the branches too is the sap in the vine only to nourish the life of the vine oh no no so in

Christ he says I'm the vine you're the branches if a man remains in me and I in him he will bear much fruit apart from me you can do nothing but remaining in me you will receive the very grace that I have within me to produce life and fruitfulness for you and it's to my father's glory that you bear much fruit and if you remain in me and my words remain in me in you well then ask whatever you will and it will be given to you you see this is how faith receives it's by empty handed! in God's kingdom asking by faith is the way to receive ask and you will receive for everyone who asks receives now that's the law of the kingdom so much so that James can say you have not because you ask not and if any of you lacks wisdom he should ask God who gives generously to all and will be given to him without finding fault oh but when he asks he must believe and not doubt because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea blown and tossed by the wind don't let that man think he will receive anything of the Lord he's a double minded man unstable and always no you must ask believing that's faith coming to receive that's the way believing prayer is the way to receive faith is the great receiver because

God is such a generous giver and faithful to his promises so he wants us to honor him he wants us to honor his generosity by asking in faith you're coming to a king Newton said so large petitions with you bring for his grace and power are such that none can ever ask too much treat him like a king and you're asking he'll treat you like a king in his giving so what do you need see it first in Christ and then go to him and ask it from him for yourself Thomas Hooker stated that principle of the Christian life and faith receiving that what we need we are to see first in Christ see it in him and then go to him and receive it from him him but hooker was just borrowing from

[34 : 09] David and David got it from the Holy Spirit Psalm 105 and verse 4 what is it that you need believer are you growing weary faint is doing your duty seem too much for you is obeying these commands sounding just I can't do it anymore I can't hold out you need power you need strength see it first in Christ Psalm 105 4 look to the Lord and his strength do you see it there see it in his creation wow look at his strength he he never grows tired or weary but he gives strength to the weary look how he created the world out of nothing see it in his redemption he acted for himself there was no one else to save so he acted!

Oh what the arm of the Lord accomplished what power see it in! he pours out upon the nations and how he provides for his people what power look to the Lord and his strength and when you see that strength in him the next phrase seek him seek his face always so look and see it in him and then seek him for it so you come and you say I I don't have strength but I see you do and it's in you for me now please I'm looking Lord I'm I'm holding out the arms of faith strengthen me and we can be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power in just that way maybe it's patience you need and you're running out and you come and you confess that but you come empty yes that's humility but but the next thing is faith receiving so so how does it work well we look to the

Lord do you know he has patience read your Old Testament was he not patient was he not slow to anger with backsliding Israel how often I sent my prophets to you and I would have gathered you how often all day long I held out my hands to disobedient and stubborn people so patient read the gospels was he not patient with Peter and James and John same lessons over and over he was willing to repeat them they're recorded several times it must have been dozens of times patient with his people so so we look to the Lord and his patience and then we seek his face always Lord I don't have this patience but I see you do and you have it for me please give me patience and so we can be patient in patient in the patience of the

Lord maybe it's love and your love is running cold maybe somebody is hard to love look to the Lord and his love do you know he has that love he has love for difficult people he has love for his enemies and that's why he laid down his life for you his enemy oh yeah Lord I see you have love for the unlovely for your enemies I need that love please give we seek his face just as it was look and live it's now look and seek and receive faith the great receiver faith looking to see it in Christ faith seeking to ask it from Christ and faith receiving drawing it from our

Savior that's living upon Christ and all that he is for all that you need maybe you're lost and you know that it takes righteousness to get into heaven what's the answer for you look to the Lord and his righteousness do you know he has a perfect righteousness worked out as a man a real man just like you no different same temptations yes in every way like you and and he he kept!

[38 : 58] it got every command no sin and so we come and we seek the we hold out our hands and say Lord I have no righteousness of my own but I see you do now give to me as it's in Christ for us to receive from him if faith is the great receiver from Christ then it's my own wretched unbelief that is my worst enemy it's my own wretched unbelief that keeps me from Christ and from the grace I could receive and need to receive from him than to war with my wretched unbelief I've got to get to Jesus that was the determined heartbeat of the woman suffering for 12 years of a bleeding disease she'd been elsewhere she'd spent all of her living on doctors and only grew worse but she looked to the

Lord and had heard that he had what she needed and so she sought him and she didn't let anything stop her oh the crowd was so thick that day it was it was shoulder to shoulder and this this little diseased woman worms her way through the crowd and she's got to get to Jesus he has what I need I don't have that healing but he does and she got close enough to touch the hem of his garment and immediately she was made whole and Jesus says who touched me Peter says Lord everybody is touching no no somebody touched me finally she comes out of the shadows and says it was me and here's why I touched you I couldn't fix it nobody could fix it but I knew you could and in faith

I reached out you know what he said to her woman your faith has healed you go in peace your faith has healed you now that's shorthand you know of course it wasn't her faith of course it was God's power that healed her but it was her faith that accessed that power and received that power and that's what Jesus put the emphasis on that's what Jesus held up for praise to teach others when you have need you come in faith and you receive the healing that's why he said on so many occasions according to your faith be it unto you faith the great receiver Jesus honors faith it's his own grace these are all graces there's no humility but what

God works in the heart there's never any faith but what God gives and where he sees it he honors it your faith has made you whole gotta get to Jesus I love the way the writer to the Hebrews keeps chasing us to Jesus he knows that faith grows best by looking upon the object of our faith and that's why after pointing us in Hebrews 11 to all the examples of faith who have run the race and finished before us he then tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus now we're told to consider the faith of Abel and Enoch and Abraham and Jacob and Noah and Moses and Joshua but nowhere are we told to fix our eyes on Abraham the race looking unto Moses but we are told fix your eyes on Jesus the grand object of faith the author and finisher of faith the one who exercised faith himself more than any other person ever exercised faith the greatest liver by faith look to

Jesus and run the race looking and don't take your eyes off of him who exercised faith in his lowest point as all he could see was the father's wrath and he couldn't even appreciate that he was his father my God my God why have you forsaken me and in that darkness faith laid a hold of the joy that would be his of bringing many sons to glory and because of that joy that was future that only faith could see he endured the cross he stuck it out until he could say it is finished he scorned it shame as he hung naked before the world condemned by man and

[44 : 27] God he scorned why because he by faith he saw what was coming as the fruit of his suffering and now he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God and the writer of the Hebrews keeps saying now look at him consider him and in chapter four he wants to tell us that there is on the right hand of the throne of the universe today a man a real man dust the dust of the earth is on the throne of!

and he's there for you he's entered in on your behalf Hebrews 6 tells us so he's there for you and he's got grace in him for you so fix your eyes on Jesus and see him for who he is see what he has done do you know he knows exactly what you need in your!

trials and temptations and that's not because he's all knowing he is but he knows it by personal experience because he's been here he became flesh and blood with a nature just like ours human and that means he knows all about our limitations all about our weaknesses all about our temptations first hand doesn't need to have anybody tell him about it he's experienced!

it and he was tempted in every way just like we are yet without sin and because he has suffered when he was tempted he's able to help those of us who are being tempted it and so he who was here is now there and he's there on the throne that rules the universe and he's there for us and he's qualified to the hilt to be our merciful and faithful high priest able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses do you believe that our weaknesses where do your weaknesses show my weaknesses show in my trials my weaknesses show in my temptations and yes my weakness is showing my sins never do I see my weaknesses so clearly as when I sin and this passage tells me if

I will but believe it that Jesus is not looking on in heaven ready to pounce on me but he's pitying me his heart is running out in compassion for me just then when I'm in my trials my temptations and my failures in sin and it's because he's that kind of great high priest that the writer to the Hebrew says now therefore let us therefore approach the throne of grace let us approach the throne of grace not with trembling but with confidence knowing that he's pitying us and why do we come gotta get to Jesus why so that we might receive there's our word for the day that we might receive mercy what do sinners need what do people what do

[48 : 04] Christians need who have just sinned we need! mercy and there's mercy with the Lord to be had so we approach the throne of grace with confidence to receive mercy what else do we need we need grace to help us in our trials our times of need and that's what he's got grace to help us so whatever your trial your temptation your sin Jesus has just the mercy just the grace to help you in it he doesn't ignore you in his time of need he doesn't pounce on you in your time of sin he's rather all the more full of pity and sympathy so don't let anything stop you from getting to Jesus he's the king of grace and he's reigning in heaven on the throne of grace and he's reigning there in order to give mercy and grace to help you in your weakness in your so go and get it holding out the empty hands

of faith to receive it all from him he's there for you he was tempted and he suffered being tempted and he did that for you so that now he will know better by personal experience how to help you with compassion are you needy you qualify come empty leave full throw yourself in your emptiness upon his fullness and tell him what you don't have but you know that he has and has it for you and then ask and receive and find day by day hour by hour that his fullness is more than enough for your emptiness stand with me and we'll confess our need together

I need the every hour I need the every hour most gracious Lord but we know that what we need is in you and that's why we're coming to you let's take our hearts and whatever we need to him this morning as we sing let's go to him king of grace blessed lord we do thank you for the record of scripture telling us who you are what you're like and we never once found you turning away anyone who came to you for grace we never once found you unable to do what they asked but we found you to be glad to make others glad and we come with our need and we thank you that you see it and you pity it and we ask you to give us them and to teach us this dynamic of looking and finding in you what we need and therefore asking and receiving by faith all that we might bear more fruit which is to your father's glory we ask it in your name amen