

1 John 5:6-12 (ESV)

This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. ⁹ If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. ¹⁰ Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Americans overwhelmingly believe that the celebration of Christmas is a good and positive thing. And most Americans don't have any problem with the greeting "Merry Christmas" rather than the generic "happy holidays."

In fact, nine out of ten Americans celebrate Christmas, including 80% of those who are non-Christians.

If you need further bolstering of your faith, you'll be happy to know that a majority of Americans recognize Christmas as a "religious holiday".

54% of Americans plan to attend Christmas services during the "holiday season." Of those who will hear the Nativity account in a worship service, about 70% actually believe in the virgin birth.

Those polling numbers are interesting, but they don't reveal all that much. Our country is more religious than Western Europe, but only on the surface.

For the true believer, it does not matter if you're with the majority or not. In fact, I'd be a bit nervous if my views on theological issues mirrored the mainstream of the culture.

If you are a true believer, the testimony of God will always trump the testimony of man.

This morning we're talking about the testimony of God in the Gospel. Last Sunday we asked "How do you know if your faith is genuine?" Today we ask, "How do you know if the faith that you believe is really true?"

Advent is a season of waiting, of anticipation. Something that you look forward to is always worth waiting for.

The faith of Advent is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not yet see.

We look forward to celebrating the birth of JESUS Christ. We anticipate a joyful Christmas season. But that's not saving faith. True faith; Advent faith, looks beyond the coming holiday.

The incarnation of the eternal Son of God is not just a holiday, but it is the central truth of our faith. Without the truth, we don't have much to offer.

Do you have the kind of faith that affects the way you live 12 months of the year rather than just the one month of December? It probably depends on just what it is that you believe.

Let's start with what the Gospel proclaims. (verse 6)

This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

The first thing that the Gospel proclaims is that JESUS Christ came into the world. It's not just that a man named JESUS actually existed in history, but that this JESUS is the Christ.

This is speaking of the incarnation. The eternal Son of God, who was with the Father from the beginning, became flesh and blood and dwelt among us.

This is he who came. The Gospel proclaims that not only is there a Creator of all that there is, but that this Creator intervened in human history.

Going back to the polls, over 80% of Americans say that they believe in God. So you probably side with the majority. But the more significant issue is what kind of God do you believe in?

Do you believe in a generic higher power? Are you a deist who believes in a creator who is a spectator to human existence? Do you believe that God is an abstract philosophical concept?

Or do you believe in the one true God who became one of us through the person of **JESUS Christ? Emmanuel. God with us. The God who came into this world to save sinners.**

The Gospel proclaims that God intervenes in the lives of His people. He comes to us. **Has He come to you?** Does He make a difference in your daily life?

Are you aware of His presence through the routine of work and leisure, in your relationships and in your pursuits? Is God just as real for you when you leave here on Sunday and throughout the week?

Or are there areas in your life that you'd prefer to be hidden away from God? Have you quarantined God out of your social life or in how you pursue pleasure or fulfillment?

If what the Gospel proclaims is true, then He came into the world as God in the flesh. He desired to dwell with us. He didn't come to be a spectator, but to be fully involved in our lives.

If you don't sense His presence, it's not because God is too distant to be involved in your life. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.

If you're waiting for an emotional or dramatic encounter, then you're not looking for God, you're looking for an experience. The God who came into the world did so in a quiet and inconspicuous way.

A young maiden named Mary, in an obscure village of Bethlehem, to a family that was as common as they get.

God speaks to us through His creation, through His Word, and at times through a still small voice.

The Gospel proclaims to be the truth. Truth that speaks to us today. **Truth that is not hidden from you.**

Acts 17:24-27 (NIV)

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷ God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

Why doesn't God make Himself known in a more obvious and dramatic way so that the truth can't be missed by anyone?

Wouldn't it be great to get a God App that so we can push a button and receive a new and fresh revelation that would renew our faith?

That wouldn't be faith, would it? Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. You must believe the truth of the Gospel.

God is not absent. He is not uninvolved. He is not uninterested in your life. He made the first move.

The Gospel proclaims the incarnation of the one true God who came into the world to save sinners. If all of that seems foreign to you, look at the testimony of God.

1 John 5:7-9 (ESV)

For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. ⁹ If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son.

The Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, the one who bore witness to Christ. The Spirit brings to mind the words of Christ. He is the helper, the counselor, the one helps us to pray when words fail us, the one bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

The Spirit guides us into all truth. He convicts our hearts of sin and of our need for a Savior. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that enables you to respond in faith to the Gospel.

The Spirit of God can be resisted. The Spirit of God can be grieved. You can sin against the Holy Spirit.

But you can also welcome the work of the Spirit of God in your life. You can be filled with the Spirit of God. You can rejoice in the Spirit.

Zechariah, Mary, and Elizabeth all spoke of the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives concerning the birth of JESUS Christ. If you're a believer, the same Spirit has spoken to you.

If you feel like you're on the outside looking in, ask that the Spirit of God will guide you to Christ.

The Spirit, the Water and the Blood all testify. They all bear witness to the truth of the Gospel.

That water and the blood point us to the beginning and the fulfillment of the ministry of Christ.

At His baptism, the Spirit of God descended on JESUS as He came out of the water. That wonderful affirmation from the Father followed. "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

If you respond in faith to the Gospel, you can know that you are a child of God, and that with you too He is well pleased.

The baptism of JESUS began His public ministry. He came to John the Baptist to receive the baptism of repentance. But JESUS had nothing to repent of.

The witness of the water is that of a Savior who identified with us in every way, except that He was without sin. The water of baptism testifies that as water washes dirt away from the body, so the blood of Christ cleanses you from all your sin.

The Spirit, the water and the blood are all in agreement. If you confess your sin, He is faithful and just to forgive your sin and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

The blood of JESUS Christ cleanses you from the guilt and the stain of sin.

(John 19:34)

When JESUS died on the cross, a spear was thrust into His side. Out of that wound came water and blood, a sign that He had indeed died.

How could it be that someone who began His ministry with the words from the Father, "You are my son, with whom I am well pleased" end it by a cruel death on the cross?

The Bible says that it was the Father's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer. That would seem unimaginable if it wasn't for the Gospel.

Only the innocent Son of God could atone for the sins of a rebellious people. He suffered the ultimate agony so that you wouldn't have to.

The Spirit, the water and the blood all testify to the work of Christ on the cross. If God seems distant to you, if you feel like the Christian faith isn't relevant to your daily life, it's because you've not met the Christ of Calvary.

JESUS came to earth not just to give us a more enlighten way to live. He didn't come here just to provide a better example to follow. He came to die on the cross for your sins.

Have you acknowledged that? Have you come to grips with the fact that your sin needs to be atoned for? Unforgiven sin separates you from the only true God who is absolutely holy.

Sin in our culture is not that big of a deal. If you are careful enough, you can probably hide most of your transgressions from others. You can fess up to a few benign faults and foibles and still present yourself as a good moral person.

But you can't hide the core of your sin from God. The image you and I portray to others doesn't impress the God who knows our hearts.

If God is distant to you, it's your unforgiven sin that separates you from His grace. You somehow think that your sin doesn't need to be atoned for. You think that you're good enough to make it on your own.

The Spirit, the water and the blood all testify that you're wrong. But they also testify that there's a better way to go. You can come to Christ in faith and receive the gift of eternal life.

1 John 5:10-12 (ESV)

Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Receiving the Testimony of God is as easy as saying "yes" to the free offer of the Gospel. But that doesn't mean that that's all there is to it.

Saving faith is not just a nod of agreement or a tip of the hat. It's the surrender of your pride; of any illusion of autonomy. It's the acknowledgement that on your own you would make a shipwreck of your life.

The Bible tells us that our ways are not His ways. You've got to own up to that. All we like sheep have gone astray, we've gone each one of us to our own way. But the LORD has laid on Christ the iniquity of us all.

Receiving the testimony of God brings you to the cross of Christ and to a spirit of repentance. Only when you humble yourself before God can you receive His grace.

One can't be neutral when it comes to the Gospel. If you say that Christianity might be okay for some people but not for you, you make God out to be a liar.

It is the Father's testimony that will have the final say. The Father was pleased with the sacrifice of JESUS because it brought justice to His grievance against mankind.

Unforgiven sin cannot be allowed in the presence of a God who is completely pure and righteous. The only way that you could come into God's presence is to have the debt of your sin paid for.

Your debt can be paid in no other way. It doesn't matter how many good and charitable works you do. It doesn't matter how pious you try to be.

You can't earn enough merit to make up for your sin. Yet when you receive Christ, you are completely forgiven. Even the stain of your sin is wiped clean.

Some of you know full well the damage that sin brings in your life. You've come to Christ in faith and know that you've been forgiven, but the residue of your sin continues to linger.

It's as if you've gone through bankruptcy so that your debt is forgiven and you can start over financially, but you feel like your credit score with God has taken a hit.

Don't make God out to be a liar. In Christ, your sin has been forgiven. As far as the east is from the west. Though your sins be like scarlet, they shall become white as snow. Receive that good news and embrace it.

Of course there are temporal consequences when we break the commands of God. We hurt others and ourselves.

But there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ JESUS. How do you know if this testimony of God in the Gospel is true?

1 John 5:10

Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself.

May that testimony be in each one here today. If you are uncertain about your relationship with the LORD, take God at His Word. Call upon the name of the LORD, and you will be saved.