

Ryan Eagy

September 20, 2017

Faith Community Bible Church

1 Peter 1:3–9

Introduction

It was almost four years ago, August 4th 2013, that we'd just put all of our stuff in pods, they were on their way to Minnesota, and we had come to church at FCBC that morning. We had two cats undoubtedly screaming the whole service out in the car. We sat with our children in the front row, and then tearfully we got into separate cars and started driving away driving to Minneapolis and Bethlehem Baptist Church where, in God's grace, he gave us another body that that welcomed us in and gave us a front row to sit in (again). For the last four years we were there and now, by God's grace, we are back and it is so exciting to be here Faith Community this morning, to be able to talk to you, and to share together in the God that we love and enjoy. Since I have come back and people have heard that I'm church planting, I get two different reactions. From unbelievers I kind of get this quizzical stare and as they think, "Church planting, what is that?" I don't know what kind of weird agricultural pictures are running through their minds. The phrase doesn't mean anything to them. And so, when I talk to them, I talk about the love of God. How we went to see more and more communities of people gathering together that they might love the Lord their God. I don't tell them in that moment but I'm thinking of Matthew 22, where our Lord Jesus is looking back all the way to Deuteronomy 6 and the great call on Israel and all the people of God to love Him with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. We are supposed to love God with our very nature—everything we are is supposed to worship him. And that is true in everything we do, church planting no less.

I haven't talked to a Christian yet who's disagreed with that explanation—that we're supposed to love the Lord. But when I talk to Christians about church planting they tend to say, "How? What do you do?" And I think what they're wondering is how are they going to take their place in that great commission call of Jesus in a church plant. How does that play itself out? And my first answer is usually, "Well I can't. We can't. God has to." There is nothing we can do to make people love him. But I think what they're really asking is a good question, and it's stemming from two different realities that they're looking at.

First, we're looking at our own lives and we say, "I know me. I don't love God perfectly every day, and I stand here and I say I love Jesus. I know what he's done for me but I fail often. I don't love him the way that I ought to." You know we believers even take things the good things of God, and sometimes even the bad things that God asks us to avoid, and we put those in a place of worship. We take good things like clothing, jobs, family relationships, church, art, our city, an athletic team, and sometimes, just for a moment, it reaches that place of supremacy where we start to worship it. It gets the worship instead of pointing us to the one who deserves all worship.

Out of that realization flows the second concern. If I struggle to do this all the time, what I'm going to do with an unbeliever who has no desire to even think about God. How am I going to begin to connect with someone like? When we see scripture proven true daily that without God interceding into people's lives they have no desire to even think about him. Their hearts are hard, their eyes are blind, their ears are deaf, they are not responding to God in any way shape or form.

We see this and we grieve it. We have family members' birthday parties, Thanksgiving, Christmas, where we long to see them savor and trust in Jesus Christ and His death on the cross for their sins. We have neighbors who have sweet smiles and care for us and we want them to find the source of that love and care from God alone. We want them to stop running that circular race, that day in and day out process of trying to find value and worth somewhere else.

So how does anyone, on a daily basis, begin to engage people who have no desire to love God? God himself does this in a myriad of ways. Every sunrise that peaks its way above Bogus Basin hill, every little white and purple clover flower in my weeds strewn yard, every beat of a hummingbird outside my living room window, is creation screaming, screaming at me and screaming at them that God has created everything and that he is there upholding creation.

God has been so gracious he's given a special revelation through his word that we might know that he has always had a plan from the beginning of time, even before time began. He knew what it was going to take to bring his people to Himself and the cost it would take on the cross.

He's even designed within us needs and desires that he won't allow to be filled with anything that can never be fully satisfied outside of a relationship with Him, through Jesus Christ.

Thankfully, God has given us tools to help us communicate these wonders of God with unbelievers. First Peter talks a lot about one of these tools. First Peter 3:15 says, "Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you."

This sermon is not going to be about church planting. It's rather a "pre-church-planting-sermon-sermon". It's oftentimes true, whether people mean to do it or not, that when they come up and they talk about things like missions or church planting or full time ministry they can accidentally give the impression that that's the only way we're actually going to ever reach lost people. It's going to take a change of vocation, a change of jobs, a whole new neighborhood for you to actually begin to connect with people.

And that may be true. There may be some people called by God's grace to go over to countries that have never even heard the name of Jesus before. Some may be called to go be a part of a church expression somewhere different, or you may be called to change neighborhoods. But God has called each and every one of us to do what we are called to do, today, with the people he's put in our lives right where we are. And our call is to be able to give a reason for the hope that is within us. That is what we're going to look at specifically this morning.

First Peter 1:3–9 describes that hope. Christians, you have something everyone else wants. You have Hope! And this isn't merely an intellectual hope, a hope that you've agreed to that doesn't do anything for you. In fact, this is a hope, the *only* hope, that can produce joy in your life! What most of us need is not a change in neighborhood, a change of job, or a change of vocation but rather a reminder of the amazing hope and the joy that we have in God.

Prayer

So will you pray with me:

Father, as we turn to your word this morning, God would you awaken hope? Would you reawaken hope in the hearts of your people. And God, if it's your will, would you bring hope to a heart that has never had it. Lord, through your Holy Spirit will you awaken us to these words. May our hearts be soft, our/my eyes be opened, our/my ears hear. And God would you continue to build faith in your people as you've promised to do, through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. In his mighty name this morning I pray, Amen.

1 Peter 1:3–9

So turn it with me if you will to 1 Peter 1:3–9. We will put it up on the screen for you as well.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from

the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice[!],

though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

(1 Peter 1:3–9 ESV)

This morning as we look at this rather large chunk of script we are going to tackle it in two main sections.

- 1) The HOPE that we have (1:3–5)**
- 2) The life of JOY we now live (1:6–9)**

The first section is 1 Peter 1:3–5. We will talk about the hope that we have. The second section is verses six thru nine. The joy that we now live so the hope that we have.

Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ. What an amazing introduction to this section!

If you've been following along with Jason through the Psalms and you've been reading them yourselves you should recognize part of this introduction. It's all over the Old Testament but specifically throughout the Psalms.

- **Psalm 41:13 - Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting to everlasting, Amen.**
- **Psalm 89:52 – Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen.**
- **Psalm 106:48 – Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting to everlasting, and let all the people say “Amen,” Praise the Lord!**
- **Psalm 124:6 – Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us to be torn by their teeth.**
- **Psalm 113:2 – Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forever.**
- **Psalm 18:46; Psalm 144:1; Psalm 16:7; Psalm 34:1; Psalm 63:4; Psalm 115:18**

And on and on and on and on. Yet Peter does something. He tweaks this phrase just a little bit. Yes, this is the same God, the only God, who's been with his people for all of times throughout the entire Old Testament but now we know something more about him. We know something about what he's done in that historical event at the Cross.

Peter wants us to praise God and that praise comes specifically out of the plan of the Father, carried out by the Son to the praise of God. And why is God the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ to be praised?

According to his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. If you are ever looking for a fantastic snippet of

Scripture that explains so many deep truths of our faith and what God has done for us. First Peter chapter one is a fantastic place to go. Let's take this just one piece at a time.

According to his great mercy

According to his great mercy. For a long time in my life as a young Christian, mercy and grace were this one big blob. God had done something for me, there was mercy, there was grace, it was all good. Thank God for Jesus! And in case you're like me I want to help you just get a couple of handles on mercy and grace.

Let's start with grace. Grace is the undeserving favor that I receive.

Let me give you an example. There is a good thing about going to Minnesota and going to a larger city like Minneapolis/St. Paul with 3.5 million people, where having five children in tow is kind of odd as you're walking around. People want to just give you things! It is an odd experience. We had more people just want to come up and give us things. Usually it was sweet older people who had a memory of living in a larger family out on the farms who'd moved to the cities. We had a nice, sweet lady at a dinner once come over and give us \$20 because she wanted us to take the kids out to dessert afterwards because she had wonderful memories of going to dessert as a family. My wife had sweet people by her platters of food and bring them to her in the grocery store so that she could have them and take them home to eat. I think seminary wasn't that hard on my family—I don't think they cried too much when we went out. It was a sweet, sweet experience. We didn't do anything to deserve that grace. People just decided to show us a favor and it was a sweet example of God's love for us.

Your mercy on the other hand is that passing over of judgment. It's passing over judgment that we deserve. I am trying to teach my kids this lesson whenever we do some sort of discipline in our house. If they don't get the discipline that we've previously agreed upon or if they get less than what we've agreed upon that's a mercy. That's like God's mercy passing over the judgment that we all deserve. And understandably, especially in a culture that likes to talk about me and what I get, we like to focus on grace. We enjoy talking about the ice cream I've gotten rather than the discipline that I didn't get.

Especially here in our passage this morning, mercy is what everything hinges on. Peter goes on to talk about the many graces that God has given us, and it all hinges on the mercy of God. Mercy is foundational to our hope. I read a wonderful quote this week about mercy:

“Like a servant, mercy tends to reside in the corner, out of sight, quietly doing the work that allows grace to be glory.”¹

Praise God for His mercy! And how has that mercy happened? Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! That is the basis that God gives us mercy!

Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

Through Jesus his death and resurrection from the dead. If there is any question in our minds when we come to this passage that it is about us, these two phrases: **according to God's mercy** and **through Jesus Christ resurrection from the dead** should cause us to remember our wonderful hope has nothing to do with us and it has everything to do what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. In fact, mercy reminds us that we should be getting punishment and wrath, and instead God has placed that on Jesus. Rather, we receive His Grace. What a wonderful exchange! And what is this

¹ Michael Herrington, *Why We Prefer Grace to Mercy*, (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-we-prefer-grace-to-mercy>) accessed 08-18-2017.

grace and mercy brought to us?

A living hope

The Lord God has caused us to be born again till living hope. That's the marvelous mercy of God! That's the grace he gives us through Jesus Christ. That we now have a hope that our identification may be with Jesus. Paul says it this way in Romans 6:4

**“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”
(Romans 6:4, ESV)**

God's amazing mercy in choosing us is accompanied by the grace of God to bring us to new life to awaken our hearts to see and love what we didn't previously love. To hear it and rejoice in what we're hearing.

To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.

And this hope is focused on a future promise. Peter says:

to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Throughout the Old Testament, Israel was waiting for this hope that they had. They were waiting for the promised land of Canaan where, when they entered in that land, they would enter into the rest and knowledge of God. We as Christians are hoping for this heavenly reward, this future moment, in a new heavens and new earth, where we will enter into a relationship with our God again that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading

This inheritance is “imperishable”—it will never stop or end. It is “undefiled”—it is not corrupted nor will it be corrupted by sin. And it is “unfading”—it will never lose its beauty of glory.

Having moved to the Midwest recently, I now have had a different picture in my mind for imperishable and unfading in an defiled. Living in a part of the country where snow is likely on the ground for about six months out of the year and the solution is to pour copious amounts of salt on everything, you begin to think about what defilement and how it looks differently now. I'll tell you a little about myself. I'm a car guy. I like cars. I think my wife and I added it up. I think I've had something like 22 cars in our marriage. Not all at once, just one at a time. They are always older cars, kind of like old beater-uppers. I like driving them around and having fun with them. Right before we left I had a 66 Bug: bright yellow, super manly! It was awesome! And we'd heard tales. We'd heard tales of the Midwest and what it does to cars. I thought that's a little exaggerated however, a Bug in feet of snow is probably not a wise decision anyway. So we sold it and we went there. It didn't take but a week to realize no one was exaggerating. Brand new cars, one or two years old, rust coming through the wheel wells and out of the back of the tailgate. I used to joke with my neighbor. They had an early 1990s late 1980s Honda Civic that was their kid's car that they drove to school. You could see through the door and see their feet as they were driving. We used to tease if they ever had any sort of mechanical failure they would just do the “Flintstone” thing and just push right through the bottom of the car and just get it to a stop.

You don't have to have lived in the Midwest to understand that idea. We've all bought that that new electronic item that has caught our eye or that new article of clothing. And yet it perishes on us with a blue screen of death or something similar to that. You have that that that outfit that you love that becomes defiled with a mustard stain so you just can't ever wear it again. We have those wonderful

Zebra striped Zubaz pants. I don't know how you remember those big baggy pants? Their glory faded so quickly, never to be seen again.

Even more difficult is when we put our hope in things like a perfect job, a perfect spouse, a perfect house. And we find that even those things can be stained by sin. That they can fade. And sadly, all of them will perish and pass away.

But the amazing truth is that God's inheritance will not! That God has kept it! And amazingly God is not just keeping your inheritance but he's keeping you.

kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Your inheritance is kept in heaven for you, you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time. God is not only guarding your inheritance but he is also guarding you through your faith, started by God and sustained by God. He is keeping you for the last time.

And that phrase **the last time** that's important. We have not fully received our inheritance yet. We shouldn't expect to see all of it now. As Paul says to the Ephesians in Ephesians 1 the Holy Spirit is the guarantor of the down payment of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it:

“[The Holy Spirit] is the guarantee [“the down payment”] of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”
(Ephesians 1:14, ESV)

To the praise of his glory we're told that by that

“no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.”
(1 Corinthians 12:3b, ESV)

It's the Holy Spirit—God's down payment to us—that is both the beginner and the sustainer of our faith in God through Christ Jesus.

So look at this whole section again with me.

Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to his great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Peter, in God's grace through the words of the Holy Spirit, has laid out exactly the hope that we have. Our God through His mercy has given us grace by causing us to be born again through Jesus Christ's resurrection and his death. We have a new life with a great hope a hope for an inheritance that never perishes. Life eternal with God worshipping him and enjoying him. Simply put, God has loved you through Jesus and in faith through him he's bringing you back to the only good life that you could ever hope to have—life with him.

Christians, this morning does, this reminder help refocus you? Does it help? I pray you remember that amazing hope that God has given you. It does me. I feel like this passage for me was sort of like lights coming up in the sanctuary of my heart and my mind. And there I see this pantheon of

small little idols called out for what they are. Right over there, there is the idol of complacency. He's got his feet kicked up, Netflix turned on. There's the idol of pride with his/my head held high. The idol of greed, the idol of lust, and on and on and on. And as God reminds me of who he is and what he's done and what he is providing for me, I begin to see them for what they really are. Small, perishing, not able to offer me any hope, any joy. And as those fade away I see the one, true throne of God with our Lord seated on it. This the beginning of loving the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, and your mind. God, through the power of His Word and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, bringing us to the only hope that we have, Jesus Christ.

If you're an unbeliever here this morning, have you thought about the hope that you have? Where you're placing your hope? Are they things that are going to be imperishable? Can they last? Will they be undefiled? Will they not fade in the joy that they give you? They will. Do you see that God is the only one that can provide you with hope eternal hope through Jesus Christ and His resurrection? Turn this morning! If you don't believe and have hope yet, turn and believe in Jesus. He wants to give you hope—hope of eternal life with him.

Seeing how our God sitting on that throne is never a begrudging moment where we say “Okay, you told me all these other idols they're just worthless. I guess I *have to* bow before you.” No, it is more like a new dawn rising in our hearts as we behold God through Jesus Christ and His wondrous, wondrous work! We want to worship him! He melts away all our other desires.

In this you rejoice!

So we turn then to the next half where Peter says

In this you rejoice

In that hope we rejoice! Amen! Where we find our joy is in the hope that God has given us through Jesus Christ. You know, every good thing that we are ever tempted to put on one of those thrones and look at instead of God, he's put there that we might see him through it. Even though we love being out in the sun it can burn us and it can hurt our eyes if we stare at it. We've been told that for weeks now (with the impending eclipse). Imagine being in the wondrous glory of God that doesn't consume you like fire but rather you experience as joy and love and peace. Think of the most intimate and best relationship you have. Then imagine being drawn into a relationship with the triune god who he himself defines love and joy and happiness.

The defeaters of this world

I love Peter! Peter is such a good pastor. It is such a temptation to want to just stay here, to keep proclaiming the glories and the wonderful things of God and what he's done through Jesus. And Peter knows his body. He knows his fellow believers. He says right:

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ

We Christians, we pastors, we do God a disservice to act like life is not hard. Peter doesn't shy away from it, he goes right at it. I stand here this morning as a man who's had two different seasons in my life of difficult health issues, but they only last a couple of years in God by His grace. They were here and then they were done. I've had difficult dark nights of the soul and God has brought me out of those. I know friends who have health problems that have gone on for decades. I know of other friends in different parts of this world that struggle to even find food every morning. I haven't lost my family. Life is hard, so I don't want to say this flippantly but I think I can affirm with Peter two

amazing truths.

- 1) **Our trials, whatever they may be, are truly only for a little while.** “Though now for a little while, if necessary.” I think I think Peter's talking about this stage this is part of our life here right now. I remember as a little kid thinking something is going to happen three days from now and that was forever. I remember getting a little bit older and thought, OK weeks maybe I can do a week but around three weeks it's getting rough. I don't know what happens to my weeks now. I'm not old by any means. My kids want to say I'm really old and that's fair. But I don't doubt that 10000 years from now standing in the presence of God and praising and worshipping him I will agree with scripture that this life was but a vapor. It may not feel that way in the moment, but it is but a vapor compared to the glory that God is taken us home to. Even better...
- 2) **It has a purpose!** These difficulties, these trials, Peter says, have a purpose. God is using it to test our faith and to produce something amazing. Do you get that in God's eyes are tested in genuine faith is worth more than gold even though it's going to perish. Do you have a category for that? A category that if you rounded up all the riches and wealth of this world and brought him to God, God would say, “I want you to have pure faith more than this.” And God is working that in you!

And that that faith that he's working through this lifetime will be praiseworthy. We will praise God for what he has done in our lives. The angels will praise God. And amazingly God Himself will praise what has happened to us. Look at 1 Corinthians 4:5

Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation [PRAISE!] from God.”
(1 Corinthians 4:5 ESV)

Oh, ESV, you watered that down. It is Praise! And I think we're scared to say that because praise is due only to God, but God does not lose anything in this kind of praise. He is the one who started that work in our hearts. He's the one who continues it until the day Jesus Christ comes. And he is the one who perfected for us for glory! God doesn't lose anything by praising the work that he has done. So that when he says to you and when he says to me, “Well done good and faithful servant” *he* gets all the glory! It may be difficult sometimes. But even our trials are part of our great hope. We had no guarantee as Christians that God is going to make this easy, in fact Scripture talks often about us and how we are the ones who are the weak, the poor, the broken vessels that God wants to use so that he may be seen as wondrous and glorious. Our trials are preparing us for that future glory, that imperishable inheritance when we are to be with our Lord.

Then Peter returns back to this rejoice. He says:

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Jason is right, joy is incredibly elusive because it's not a thing we can go grasp and hold on to. Neither is joy this feeling we can well up inside of ourselves and we can make it happen whenever we want. Rather, joy is a person and found in the relationship that we have with Jesus Christ.

I love this phrase: **though you have not seen him you love him.** Isn't it encouraging that even for

the early church this close to the beginning they already hadn't seen him. They had the experience I have. I haven't seen Jesus but I love him. I love what he's done for me.

Exhortation

Now I read this next section is a bit of an expectation. An exhortation to me and maybe an exhortation to you. Every church, every tribe within Christianity has its strengths and its weaknesses. Our tribe, our group, we have a great strength in intellectual honesty and a desire to break apart things want to know the truth. Hold on to that, rightly teach it and be super clear. Emotions? Ehhh... Right, sure I'll happy. I do that, I'll be a happy guy. My daughter walks down that aisle to get married, I better be shedding a little bit of a tear. I understand that, but having a lot of emotions. I don't know about that.

Now I'm preaching to myself as much to anyone else, but I think there is a truth that we all need to hear:

Joy inexpressible does not mean unexpressed joy!

Peter is saying that our living hope should, dare I say **must**, cause us to rejoice! We're not all going to wave our hands around. We may not all dance like the cute little Ilgenfritz children over here this morning during worship time, but it **has to, it must**, well up in some sense of joy in your heart of what God has done for you. This is exactly the passage that Jonathan Edwards, one of the Puritan pastors from colonial America went to right after the Great Awakening. He'd seen tons of people say they came to Jesus and then they fell away from the faith. And he wrote his treatise *Religious Affections* after having read this and said affections have to be changed. There must be something different. And I think Peter's saying the same thing.

If I tell you that I have inexpressible love for my wife but you never see me express that love, you should question whether that's true. If I say I have inexpressible joy when my children run to greet me after we haven't seen each other in a long time yelling, "Papa, papa," but you don't see that joy in any sense on me when that happens, you should question it. Edwards goes out of his way to make sure that we realize there is not one particular kind of affection that proves it all, as if you just had that one affection and now you're good. But it should affect us. Joy should be there. True joy in the hope that God has given you has to be expressed.

Conclusion

And now that brings us back full circle to where I started this morning right. How do you begin to engage in a culture that doesn't want to even talk about God? Who don't even want to mention him? Peter's assumption is that something's going to be different in your life they are going to see that something. They will realize that you have a hope that they don't have. And they will want to know about it.

I don't think the place where we start is necessarily going and talking about different methods, though methods are great methods can be very helpful. We need to talk about a certain books to go through, a certain way of engaging people. But rather, I think where it all starts is going back and looking at the hope that God has given us. That we might gaze upon that wondrous cross where God provided and dealt with all of our sins that we might rejoice and feel that joy inexpressible welling up as we love and thank our Lord.

So, as I end, will you close your eyes. I'm going to turn this passage into a prayer. If you're a Christian, will you pray this to our God with me? And if you're an unbeliever, would you maybe ask God, "Is this what you've really done for me?" And I pray you would see that it is.

Prayer

Lord God, would you be blessed. God. Our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you Lord are to be blessed because according to your great mercy you caused me, you cause everyone here, to be born again to a living hope. Living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Lord you are bringing us to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for us, Lord. Though now we get tastes and pieces of it all. Thank you that by your power you are guarding us through faith for a salvation that's ready to be revealed at the last time, O Lord. And if it would please you, would it be that today we might meet you. God in this we want to rejoice! We want our joy to be based in what you've done for us in Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus, thank you, thank you for dying on the cross for our sins. And Lord, though now for a little while, if necessary, you've brought us trials, Lord, would you let our faith be tested and shown as genuine. I can't imagine having faith that is more pure than gold. I don't even know what that would look like, but God would you please continue to work that in my heart and in the hearts of all my brothers and sisters here, that our faith might be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the day of Jesus's great return. Jesus, we don't see you right now but we love you. And Lord Jesus, even though we don't see you we want to believe in you and we rejoice with joy inexpressible and filled with glory. God, please continue to work out our faith and the salvation of our souls. In Jesus Name I pray, Amen.