

## “Believe Me”

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John 14:1-14

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

What a joy it is to preach on these, my favorite verses. For people staring death in the face, these verses contain the very essence of the hope we have in Jesus Christ. They offer us assurance that our faith is not just hopeful wishes, but based on solid truth, which is why I include them in every celebration of life service I officiate. Yet, in order for them to offer the assurance, comfort and hope they contain, the person hearing them, must believe the one who says them, Jesus.

Did you ever have a conversation with someone who is telling you a fantastic story and they say, “Believe me. It’s true.”? There is a video going around on FB whereby a woman says that an alligator is trying to get into her house, banging on the door and looking in the windows. Her way of saying, “Believe me,” is to post a video of the alligator doing just that. Without the video, why would you believe this stranger’s fantastic story?

Unlike this woman, Christians do not have videos of Jesus speaking to his disciples, let alone his resurrection and ascension into heaven. All we have is the testimony of the people who were there and saw it for themselves. Their testimonies are found in the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

But even Jesus’ disciples had a hard time believing, even when they did see it for themselves. In John 20:19-31 we read how Jesus appeared to his disciples in a locked upper room the evening of his resurrection. The disciple, Thomas, was not present when this happened. When the others told him about Jesus’ appearance, he said, “*Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.*” A week later, Jesus gave Thomas the opportunity to *do just that when he once*

*again appeared to the disciples, and Thomas was with them. “Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’”*

Sometimes it’s hard to believe something unless we see it for ourselves, that’s when faith kicks in. I cannot see radio waves, but I know they exist by the sounds I hear on the radio. I can’t see electricity, but I can feel it if I stick a fork into an outlet. I can’t see microwaves, but I can see how it cooks my food. I can’t see love, but I feel it in my heart when I so much as think about the ones I love. There are a lot of things I don’t see, but trust in the reality of their existence.

The same is true of Jesus. I heard the stories of Jesus in Sunday School. I read the words of Jesus in the Bible. I heard family and strangers tell me how they knew Jesus in their lives. But it wasn’t until I put MY FAITH in Jesus that I was able to experience him for myself. It wasn’t until I TESTED the words of God I read in the Bible, that I knew the truth of those words. I took a leap of faith and put my faith in Jesus, now I LIVE WITH faith in Jesus, and all the hope, assurance, strength and peace that Jesus offers. That’s why I love to share Jesus’ words in John 14, assuring people of the truth of these words.

What Jesus says in verse 11 is essential, “Believe me...” A person must first believe Jesus is telling the truth before they can take the next step found in verse one, “Believe IN God, believe also IN me.”

A person must first believe someone is telling the truth before they can believe IN them. I have to trust my auto mechanic is telling me the truth that I need new fuel sensor before I am willing to pay him to replace it, especially if I am not experiencing any problems. Whether it’s faith in Jesus or my auto mechanic, it is ok to get a second opinion, just to verify. That is where the testimony of other Christians comes in. If we are not sure about Jesus, ask another Christian about their faith. Christians are expected to encourage one another with their testimonies.

The apostle John understands this very well, for he ends his Gospel by saying, “*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.*” (John 20:30)

John understands our need for proof. After all, he wrote this verse immediately after the story about Thomas and how his unbelief changed to belief. One of the joys of the 4 different Gospels is that we get to hear the testimonies of Jesus from different perspectives.

I was listening to a police officer the other day talk about his conversion to Christ. This man was a detective working cold case files, meaning he only had the written testimonies of eyewitnesses to help him solve crimes that happened years before. He said that when he first read the Gospels, he was encouraged to hear that they were not all identical. He said identical witness statements are a red flag that the people are telling a lie. Police training and experience have taught him that eyewitnesses have variations in their statements, because each of them sees the event from a different point of view.

For Christians, not only do we have 4 different Gospels, but we have all the different stories in the New Testament of how different people experienced Jesus and his Father, and the Holy Spirit.

By the way, if you think it is hard to believe Jesus - and he was a documented person in history – imagine how hard it is to believe in God the Father and God the Holy Spirit?! But that is exactly what Jesus is telling us to do in our reading today and in the following verses. He says,

*Jn 14:1 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; Believe also in me.*

*Jn 14:2 In my Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*

*Jn 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me so that where I am, you may be also.*

*Jn 14:4 And you know the way to the place where I am going.”*

*Jn 14:5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”*

*Jn 14:6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

*Jn 14:7 If you really knew me, you would know my Father also. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”*

*Jn 14:8 Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”*

*Jn 14:9 Jesus answered: “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?*

*Jn 14:10 Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.*

*Jn 14:11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.*

*Jn 14:12 I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*

*Jn 14:13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.*

*Jn 14:14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

*Jn 14:15 “If you love me, you will obey what I command.*

*Jn 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—*

*Jn 14:17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.*

*Jn 14:18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*

*Jn 14:19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.*

*Jn 14:20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.*

*Jn 14:21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”*

*Jn 14:22 Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”*

*Jn 14:23 Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*

*Jn 14:24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.*

*Jn 14:25 "All this I have spoken while still with you.*

*Jn 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

*Jn 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (verses 1-14 are NRSV, 15 – 27 NIV)*

Listening to Jesus, can't you just hear him saying through these words, "BELIEVE ME!" The Father is real! I and the Father are one. Believe me, the Holy Spirit is real! I am giving you the Spirit of Truth and he will help you understand. He will counsel you and help you in your unbelief. Believe me, *"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."*

I understand your pastor is preaching on Wesleyanisms, so let me share with you this comment by John Wesley from his sermon on the "Witness of the Spirit" (Discourse II. "John Wesley" by Albert Outler p, 211). The focus of Wesley's sermon was Romans 8:16, *"The Spirit himself bears witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God."* He said, "The testimony under consideration is given by the Spirit of God to and with our spirit: he is the person testifying... by "the testimony of the Spirit" I mean an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Jesus loves me and has given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out and I, even I, am reconciled to God."

For John Wesley, The Holy Spirit is the one who helps us believe Jesus, and believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit affirms the Word of God found in the Bible, and impresses them upon our hearts so that we may know the truth about Jesus – that he loves us individually; that he died to take away our sins, and that we are reconciled to God through our faith in Jesus, such that, when we, or any other Christian dies, we can be certain that we will go to be with Jesus and his Father to live with them forever.

This is the Gospel! This is the Good News! Jesus is real! The Father is real! The Holy Spirit is real! If you don't believe me, believe Jesus! I've got lots of personal stories of miracles in my life that I could tell you about, but I want to close with the Apostle John's words about his Gospel, "Jesus did many other miracles that are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30)