

Service Overview

Speaker: Stephen Bates

Sermon Series: Learning to Walk

Message: Learning to Walk with Conviction

Scripture Reference: 1 John 1:1-4 & 2 John

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Service Welcome & 'Ascend into the Spirit' Word *Speaker: Worship Team*

Good morning. Welcome to church, everybody, and welcome to those who are joining online. Good to have you here this morning.

I'd just like to share a dream that I had this week, and what God was speaking to me through that dream. And then we're going to join in with worship together. So, I dreamt that I was walking on a path, and it was really comfortable, great weather, and the conditions were fine. It was easy walking. I knew what I was doing. I had my backpack on, and I felt as I did when I was 25, and I left Australia with a backpack, and I had a one way ticket to Istanbul. That was an exciting phase.

So as I was walking, the road was starting to incline a little bit and it got a bit harder and a bit harder going up the hill and it required a bit more effort. Then I noticed that it became steep so quickly that it was actually a vertical wall in front of me. And I realised, 'I can't walk up this wall. I'm going to need to do something different. I can't just keep doing things the same way.' At that point, I woke up.

I said to God, 'what? What's this about?' And I felt like he said, 'it's time to move in a new way. The methods, mentalities and modalities of the past will not work anymore. To climb is to walk in the spirit. You will need to use different muscles and you'll need different equipment. You can't take baggage with you. You'll need to exercise.'

And I felt that this was also a word for the church, that God's actually calling us in this hour to walk in new ways, to walk in the spirit and to ascend and to go into new things in God. And we can't do it if we're just doing the same things that we've always done. There is a requirement for us to press in to the new things that God is calling us to. It says in Psalm 24, 'who may ascend the hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.' So his standards are high. But we come not in our own righteousness, but in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

'Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you', it says in James 4:8. What an amazing God we have that he's responding to us when we come to him. He actually turns and responds to us and he draws near to us. It's a beautiful picture of this responsiveness that we can we can communicate and commune with the divine in this in this relationship.

So, what stops us from drawing near to God? It's usually this feeling of 'I'm not sure if I'm clean enough.' 1 John 1:9 says, 'if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.' So let's stand. I'm going to pray, and then we'll start to sing.

Pre-Worship Prayer *Speaker: Worship Team*

So, Lord, we thank you that you have made a way for us to walk in righteousness, to walk in truth, to walk in the spirit. You have made the way through your son Jesus, his life and his death and his life. So thank you that you're here, Holy Spirit. Thank you that you are working in us. Help us to praise God today. Help us to lift our hearts to you. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Worship Singing

Song: Rise by Kirby Kaple, Pat Barrett, Nate Moore

Song: Fill This Place by Jake Espy, Jerrica Matrone

Song: It Is Well With My Soul (It Is Well) by Horatio Gates Spafford, Mark Roach

Post-Worship Prayer *Speaker: Reuben*

Thank you, father for your great love for us. Whether we are empty or full, whether we have it all or have nothing, you are the constant and you are enough. You are more than enough for us. So we thank you, Lord, for the amazing work that you're doing in our lives, the restoration and the work in our hearts. We just thank you Lord, and we say yes to your work and your continued presence in our lives. Thank you Jesus, and all of God's people said amen.

Introduction, Announcements & Upcoming Events *Speaker: Reuben*

Welcome to PBC. Have a seat, guys. My name is Reuben, in case you are too shy to ask. It's so good to have you here this morning. I know that you will be blessed. We're live streaming this service, so a warm welcome to those joining us online. For those who are online, you might want to subscribe to our YouTube channel, so it's easier to watch again next Sunday. And, even better, if you are blessed by the online streams, do write in and let us know, It's always a blessing when we hear about people online that we haven't met yet.

This morning, Steve will be kicking off a new sermon series, about learning to walk based on the books of 1, 2 & 3 John. And I know that God's timing is always perfect, and it's really going to speak to our hearts. If you're new to this church, and want to do life with us, we're having a newcomer's meeting this afternoon at 2:30 in the basement. So come see me or any of the pastoral team, as it's still not too late.

Before the kids go out, I'd like all of us to think of one encouraging thing to say to the person next to you. It doesn't have to be long, and you don't have to overthink it. The Holy Spirit will help you. And for those who are online, if there's someone that you need to encourage today, you could even text them while you're waiting for the service to continue after the kids go out.

--- Break as the children leave for Kids' Church ---

All right. Was there any encouragement to be heard at all? I see quite a few hands. It was worth it, wasn't it? Okay. And if you haven't heard, tomorrow night there will be a group that's meeting. It's about navigating neurodivergence and it's a community support group for mums, grandmas and carers of those who are neurodivergent. They'll be meeting in the basement tomorrow evening.

Also, last Sunday, we played a video from 2021 about our plans for a new ministry centre. Do you remember that? Were you here for that? And there was an architectural walk through with very interesting looking people in it. If you do not know what I'm talking about, please go and have a look at last week's livestream so you can be up to date with what's going on as we pray towards the new ministry centre later in the service.

Life In The Spirit Promo *Speaker: Various*

And this week we have another video about 'Life in the Spirit', an upcoming course that is really central to life in this church. So we're going to play that for you now. Sign up online or in the foyer.

--- Break as the Life in the Spirit video plays (transcript below) ---

Life in the Spirit is a fantastic course that really helps to open up our understanding of who the Holy Spirit is, and the beautiful role that he plays in empowering us in our work and in our life with Jesus.

Personal Testimony #1: What I found most helpful about the course was its balance and its solid biblical foundation. So what I saw in this was that it doesn't shy away from the fullness of the things and the fullness of our experience of the Holy Spirit, but it also doesn't stray into over sensationalising certain aspects of that. It's just really well balanced and really well put together. Very helpful from that point of view.

This course is just so encouraging. I love that it seeks to uncover what the Bible really says about the Holy Spirit, and it gives plenty of time to engage with him in a really safe space. It is gentle, it's empowering, and it's stretching.

This course has a strong emphasis on connecting Bible truths that we can read about the Holy Spirit with how it works out in our lives. Some people tend to know a lot about the Bible and what it says about the Holy Spirit, but maybe with feeling that there's not so much of the bubbling up of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and we wonder why others of us may feel like God speaks to us and leads us.

There's a real sense of presence of God in our lives, but we're not sure how to evaluate that and what to do with it and where it fits in scripture. We deliberately want to bring both of those things together, so that there's a knowledge of the scripture about the Holy Spirit, and also a sense of the welcoming of the presence and the empowering ability that God gives us to live in this world.

And that forms a foundation as we move together in following Jesus. If you feel a longing or a gap in your Christian journey where you feel like you need to get closer to God, but you just haven't been able to yet, the 'Life in the Spirit' course might very well facilitate that for you. If you're hungry to see more of the outworking of the Holy Spirit in your life, or if you've got questions about things you might have seen or heard or read before that you're just not sure about, or maybe you feel like there's a kind of blockage that's really getting in the way of your intimacy with Jesus.

If you feel a nudge, can I encourage you to come along to Life in the Spirit and just see what the Lord wants to release in your life?

Meaningful Connections Retreat Promo *Speaker: Congregation Member*

Hello everyone! I've also been to the Life in the Spirit course and it really is a wonderful, wonderful course. If we haven't met. My name is Jane*, and I'm part of the PBC Women's Committee, who organises and plans and prays for these events. So if I'm up here, it means there's one coming up. And so on the 10th of August, in 2 weeks' time, we'll be having the 'Meaningful Connections Retreat. It's an afternoon specially designed for exploring our personal connection with God and with each other across the generations. So, Kathy, our pastor, and Colleen, who's a social worker and a clinician, have put together guided activities and practical tips to cultivate those connections. And there's going to be space to reflect and a time of worship as well.

So this event also ties in with a lot of the teaching that we've had in our sermon series, particularly about being our authentic selves and gathering and meeting together around the table with Christ, and to see each other the way that Christ sees us without those worldly goals that we have, and it'll be fun. So if you were at the morning tea on the 18th of May, and it's okay if you weren't, but if you were, it's going to be a continuation of build from what we shared at that event.

The food, though, is going to look a little bit different with the 12:00 start. We will be having lunch together, and if you were around for the retreat a few years ago, the pies are back. So? They're from a local patisserie, Watch Your Fingers, in Constitution Hill. There'll also be afternoon tea with Liz's hot chocolate sticks. And we're going to have some spiced cider as well. So if you don't know this already about the PBC women's group, is that one of the love languages is food. And so it's just one of the ways that we love to look after you and care for you and make you feel special. So come along, enjoy and relax. The last week to sign up is next week, but if you know that you're coming along and you haven't signed up yet, please do so.

You can sign up using the QR code on the invite through the newsletter if you get it, or just on the events page of our website. \$25 or \$20 concession. But please don't let the cost be a barrier to you attending or if you're wanting to bring someone along and cost is a bit tricky. Just come and talk to me and Kathy and we'll sort it out. So I'll be in the foyer after the service. Come and say hello. I can sign you up and I can answer any questions. Sound good?

Prayer Into New Ministry Centre *Speaker: Reuben*

Thank you. We just want to have a short time of prayer now. So I'd like you to gather in groups of 2, 3 or 4 with those around you. Many churches do building projects, and it becomes this mammoth manmade thing that has an agenda. I think we really want to pray this morning into letting God lead us with a vision that he is guiding us, and we're not trying to make things happen in our own strength.

So, I would like us to pray into that in in groups now that God will lead us and give us the vision. That we're not striving in our own ways to make ourselves great in any measure, but really that we are partnering with him and the Holy Spirit in seeing the transformation of lives, our lives and those around us. And that's really the heart of this. So yeah, I'll leave it to you to pray and, and I'll wrap up in a few minutes.

--- Break as the congregation breaks into small groups and prays into the ministry centre project ---

Heavenly father, we just recognise that you are pouring out your spirit on your sons and daughters. When you give us vision, let us see what you are doing on earth, that we may join in with you and partner with you as your children. Thank you for your delight in us. We thank you that you are paving a way for more transformation to come.

We recognise that unless you build a house, we labour in vain. And so, Lord, we just commit this entire endeavour to you, that you will provide, you will empower and you will grant us all the gift of generosity that we learned about last week, Lord, by the power of your spirit. Lord, won't you move our hearts to know how to pray, how to speak about this in a way that glorifies your name completely?

Lord, would you rewrite the experience of such a project for all of us? They will bring such glory to your name. So Lord, we just ask for your empowerment right now, that you make us one as you are one, and that we will see heaven on earth, your kingdom come, your will be done through us, through our trust and obedience.

Lord, we give you all the glory to your name. We love you, Jesus. Amen.

Bible Reading: 1 John 1:1-4 & 2 John (NIV UK)

1 John 1:1-4: 1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We write this to make our^[a] joy complete.

2 John: 1 The elder, To the lady chosen by God and to her children, whom I love in the truth – and not I only, but also all who know the truth – 2 because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us for ever:

3 Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love.

4 It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. 5 And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. 6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

7 I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch out that you do not lose what we[a] have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. 9 Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them. 11 Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work.

12 I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

13 The children of your sister, who is chosen by God, send their greetings.

Sermon: Learning to Walk with Conviction *Speaker: Stephen Bates*

Good morning everyone to those in the room, but also those watching online. We're commencing a new series looking at the letters of John and with an emphasis on the first one, which is the longest one. Before we have the reading, though, I want to say something about John, but also I want to say something about why he wrote the letter. So John is one of the 12 chosen by Jesus to be his disciples. And in addition to writing the three letters, he also wrote the gospel of John.

Now for three years, John literally walked with Jesus. So where Jesus was, John was, what Jesus said John heard. And maybe he made some notes as well. What Jesus taught, John remembered and what Jesus did, John took to heart. He saw it and he imitated it. And so this is what I want to say about John, that's really important to understand is that he was a witness, a witness to the life of Jesus Christ. He wasn't somebody who decades later decided that he would write a story about Jesus Christ. He actually walked with him. He knew him.

But if you were to choose between somebody who was a witness or somebody who was just a theory or a researcher, which one would you tend to believe? The witness is a quick example. A few years ago, Kathy and I were at home, we were having dinner with some family, and there was a lot of loud noise yelling, sirens came. What had happened is, like, we'd heard what had gone on, but somebody was very badly injured, charges were laid and it went on for quite some weeks.

But on the night that happened, the police came over to our place about 9:00 at night, and they asked me, "Did you hear or see anything across the road?" And I said, "Yes, I did." And I told them

what I saw and what I heard. But I mean, what would the police have done if I'd said, "Well, now I didn't see or hear anything, but I have a theory about those people who live across the road." They would have shut the door and left.

John writes as a witness. That's a really important thing to understand. Why does he write? Okay, a little bit of backstory on why he writes the letters. In particular, he writes because there were theories going on about Jesus. So these are theories not written by witnesses, by other people who were trying to explain who Jesus was.

You'll understand that there were some who came with the opinion that Jesus was not God. That's still a common understanding in our world. A good percentage of our people will say Jesus was a prophet, but God has no son. Jesus is not divine. He is not the Son of God. Well, that was the case back in the days of the early church as well.

He was simply a man who was crucified by the Roman. End of story. A good man, nothing more than that. But there were other theories going around, and they're a little bit more interesting in some ways. They were theories composed by people who we call Gnostics. Now, Gnostics claimed to have special knowledge. These were special revelations given to them from the spirit world, which gave them this knowledge that nobody else had. Kind of like conspiracy theories back in those days.

And so, there were a couple of different Gnostic theories going on about who Jesus was. Now, Gnostics generally saw the saw existence in two realms. One is the spiritual existence, which was good. You couldn't see it, but it was good and it was pure. But then there was a physical existence, and that's like our bodies, that's this earth, and that was evil. They didn't understand that God had made us and created all things good. They saw matter as evil.

And so one of the theories was that Jesus came as a spiritual being, and that's all he was. He was only spirit because anything good would not have a human body attached to it. And so they deny that Jesus came in the flesh. And then there was a variation of the theory, and it said that while Jesus was human at the beginning, so when he was born, he was born as a human, grew into a man, but then he became spiritual. He became spiritual at his baptism when the Holy Spirit came on him. And that made him a spiritual being. There's still a little bit of a variation of that theory going around some in some places today. But then he didn't stay a spiritual being because the cross was before him. And the spiritual being could not have the cross in their life, and so before he died, the spirit left him. And so when he was crucified, he was only crucified as a man. So that one was going around.

So John has these theories going around and he goes (like when you know someone and somebody saying something different about them, "well, it's not even not even close to being true." That's effectively what he's doing. He's saying, "That's not even close to being true. I was a witness to this.

Let me tell you something. Jesus is fully God, fully man, fully human, fully divine.” And to John, this mattered. We may go, “Look, it doesn't matter. What does it matter if people have a slightly different view of Jesus? You know, it's just slightly different. Human. Not human. Divine. Not divine. Whatever. One, not two. That's okay. We can do that.” But to John, it did matter. And I just want to say to us, it should matter as well. Like it makes a really, really big difference, because the things that we believe shape what we do.

And so a lot of what John will also write about, he speaks a lot about, like who Jesus is. But then throughout the book, you'll see that he also writes about how that then shapes us. It shapes the way that we see the world, shapes the way we see ourselves, and it shapes our behaviour, the way that we treat one another.

And so he teaches us through this letter and also the other two letters, both of which talk a lot about the way we walk in truth. But if we're going to walk in truth, then we also need to walk in the light. If we're going to walk in the light, then it has the implications that we must walk in love and have love for one another as well.

So, these become his convictions and these really matter. And it mattered so much to John that he would suffer for these convictions. It mattered so much for the apostles that they, all the other apostles, would be killed for these convictions. They refuse to say and to teach and to testify anything other than Jesus was fully human, yes, but also fully divine, and it makes a big difference.

--- Break as a member of the congregation reads the Bible aloud ---

I really want to focus just on the four verses John starts this first letter with, but the second letter reinforces it. You would have seen just the statements around those who come denying that Jesus came into the flesh. But this really does matter in terms of how we understand Jesus. What I may say to you this morning, it might make you go, “Yeah, that's pretty basic. I know that, I know that.”

But we need to understand that there is a centrality to the Christian faith that we cannot let go of, and that is that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine. To describe Jesus in any other way lessens who he is, diminishes who he is. And that's what I want to encourage us as I go through this. Don't make Jesus less than who he is. If we deny his divinity, if we say that he's not really God, and a lot of people would say that. They say that he's just a good teacher, he's just a good man. You know, he's somebody who, if you look at him, he's worth following and the example that he had. Like “That's okay. That's nice. He was all that.”

But he's more. You're making him less than what he is, because there is a divine aspect to him. He wasn't just a man who lived a good life. If that was the case, his death on the cross is meaningless. Meaningless for us. He needed to be perfect to God himself. This is the gospel, the good news.

Because of what we were unable to do, God himself comes in the person of Jesus Christ and does what we are not able to. We can't diminish him by removing his divinity from him.

But in the same way, we can't remove that human aspect to him as well. He was fully human. He was as human as you and I. He got hungry, he got tired, he got thirsty, at times he seemed cranky, at times he grieved. But he experienced everything that we did. And if we spiritualise Jesus to such a degree that he becomes something other than human, then we rob him of just the sacrifice that he made to come and to be with us, to experience all that we experience.

But also, we lose our salvation in the sense it had to be somebody who was one of us who died. He had to be both fully divine, fully human. And so this is a really key aspect of the Christian faith. One of the things that John does in his letter here is, I think, ask the really good question, and that is like, love and unity is really, really strong for John. But at what point does love and unity allow a variation of the truth, a walking away from the truth?

You know, it's a lovely thing to say, "Oh, well, all religions are the same and so we should come together." But the reality is, that's not going to work. But even within the Christian church, what if you come across people who profess Christianity, but maybe, or claim to be Christians, but actually hold a doctrine that either denies the divinity or the humanity of Jesus Christ? How do you love those people? Not in the sense of course you get to love them, but how do you fellowship with them?

John makes it really clear. Have nothing to do with them. So it raises some really good questions. John starts this letter really strongly with three strong convictions that he has, and these convictions shaped the rest of the letter, but they also shape his instructions to the church on how we are to live. And I just want to unpack these three convictions.

The first one is where he starts, and that is that Jesus Christ is nothing less than fully human and fully divine. He is the eternal divine Son of God who became flesh and lived among us. He starts by saying, *'that which was from the beginning, which we've heard, which we've seen with our eyes, which we've looked at, which our hands have touched.'*

Sounds really familiar to his gospel in some ways, doesn't it? *'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.'* So he uses this imagery and he makes it very clear Jesus was not born at Christmas. That was not when Jesus began. Jesus has always been there. He is the eternal one.

I love the way that John progresses in. "How do I know this to be true? Why am I so convicted around this?" says John. He said, "I'll give you three things. The first is, I've heard God, I've heard him, I've heard him now." How many have ever had a sense that we've actually heard God speak to us? Me. You might think I'm crazy, but that's how I came to faith, right? I actually had a really strong

sense, and a number of you also. In Scripture, a lot of people have heard God speak. And so, John just can't say, "I know Jesus is divine because I've heard him speak." You kind of go, "Well, yeah, like but a lot of us of here have heard God speak. So what does that prove? And also, it doesn't prove that God came to us in the flesh in Jesus Christ because you've heard him speak."

So then he ramps it up. He said, "We've seen. Oh, how many of us have seen God? Oh, are you still alive if you're seen God? It's a theological question, right? We've seen maybe things that God is doing, but have we actually seen God face to face? Not yet, we will. He said, "I've seen him, we've seen him." But then let's ramp it up again, because there were some people in Scripture who saw God and lived. He says, "But I've touched him."

I love that. We have looked at, and our hands have touched. "How do I know this to be true? That Jesus is fully divine, fully human?" says John. "Because I was there, I was with him, saw, heard and touched. This is how I know. We are more than just witnesses. We were companions on the road. We were brothers. This is how I know this to be true." And this is the first conviction, is the one he starts with, is the one that he needs to drill into straightaway, and make sure that the readers and us who hear this understand fully divine, fully human, this is who our God is.

So what about us? So we are not there. We didn't spend three years walking with Jesus. But what I do want to say is that we need to develop the same strength of conviction about the identity of Jesus. We need to steer away from any kind of teaching or understanding (because, you know, like all things, I get a little bit boring over time, and so somebody sees a new angle, and so I, you know, bring this teaching, it's a little bit new.)

We've got to hold on to the testimony of the apostles in who Jesus Christ is. We weren't there. Then can we have the same conviction? Yes, we can. John writes these words so that we also can be convinced in the full humanity and the full divinity of Jesus Christ. Our certainty comes from the testimony. And they were witnesses. They were the ones who were there. We have it recorded in our scriptures, in the Gospels, and in the rest of the New Testament. Their words are not corrupted.

There is so much evidence around the accuracy of what we have in our New Testament. Not only are the accounts, in terms of the four gospels closely agreeing with each other, not only have they been recorded in terms of like, we have so many fragments of them that we have such amazing confidence in what we have is what was written.

But also, these were documents written within memory of the events actually happening. These were not compiled within 100 years, 200 years afterwards, these were documents that began to be produced within living memory of what took place. And so there's an objective way in which we can actually grow in our conviction. You know, for some of us, it's not good enough for someone to say, "you should be convinced that Jesus Christ is both fully God, fully human." "Yeah, that's a nice idea,

but I'm not convinced." But there is an objective way in which we can read about this. Their testimony matters.

Now, my understanding is that my birthday is on the 13th of March, and I don't, I can't remember my birth, even though I was there, so in terms of my belief of my birthday, I'm actually dependent upon my mum. Now, I'm fairly certain my mum was present at my birth, and she tells me that I was born there on the 13th of March. And so I have confidence in that.

We can have the same confidence of the witnesses who were there with Jesus. The other reason we can have confidence, and this might sound a little mystical and maybe not as strong for some of you, is that there is actually a subjective reality to the person of Jesus in that our experience of Jesus can bring conviction. This is actually the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the spirit is to actually reveal the person of Jesus Christ to us. And so definitely the life, the death, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a historical event, but also Christ is also a present reality in us through His Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit will bring conviction to understanding of who he is.

All right. So that's where John starts. And that's really key to everything else that will flow in this letter, including his next two convictions. His second conviction, because of what Christ has done being fully human, fully divine, is actually around our identity that we are people who have received salvation. When John describes salvation, he doesn't describe it in terms of just forgiveness of sins. It is that. But it's more than that.

You may have noticed in the passage that he describes it in terms of fellowship. Fellowship, I think, is only used by Christians. I haven't really heard many other organisations use the word fellowship, but it's a beautiful Greek word, *koinonia*, which speaks of a oneness, a connection that is there between believers.

But the way that John describes salvation is he talks about we have fellowship with God, and we have fellowship with Jesus Christ. And in Jesus Christ we are then reconciled with each other as we are reconciled with God and His Son, Jesus Christ. So it's like this circle or it's like a triangle, whichever way you look at it. There's the work of God and Jesus Christ, which reconciles us to him, but then also brings us into this family. This fellowship is '*koinonia*' with one another. So our identity is as those who are chosen by God, loved by God, saved by God. We become sons and daughters of God, and we are brothers and sisters with each other.

'And so we walk not only in truth, but we also walk in love', says John. The other thing that John says about this fellowship, he talks about *'our fellowship is with the father, with his son, Jesus Christ. And we write this to make our or your joy complete.'* There's a joy that comes in knowing who we are. We give ourselves various identities. Maybe we're a father or a mother or a brother or a school teacher.

But for John, this is the central identity in which we take hold of, and that is that we are sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters with each other. And this is not something that we can lose. We can't lose our salvation. We can't lose our fellowship with God like we would lose a set of keys. It doesn't work like that. This is something that is certain. Sure. And John is so convicted of this, he says, "There is a joy that comes from knowing that." When you know who you are, there is a joy in that.

And when the knowledge of who you are is based on more than just something you've made up or based more on than just a sporting team or something like that, when it's actually based in a relationship with God, the one who knows you and who loves you and has brought you into his own family. there is a joy that comes from the certainty of that. It's a joy that's now, regardless of the circumstances you find yourself in, and it's a joy that goes into eternity.

And again, for us, how do we take hold of this? How do we step into the identity that John is speaking of? For me, it's that resurrection is the proof of everything. Like, I take hold of this identity because I look at the person of Jesus Christ. All that he did, his life and death, but then also all the promises he's made, in the resurrection. That's where I find the proof. You can go out and say a whole lot of stuff. But for Jesus, he said stuff that happens. And he spoke about how he would die for us, but how he would be raised again to life. And for me, that's the clincher. That's where my identity is. I am in Christ and he is in me. I can trust him. I can take him at his word.

Fr me, it's the resurrection. My conviction around my identity as well as the identity of Christ is grounded in a historical event. And again, we can go back, look at the scriptures, test them objectively, measure them up against other historical documents. Can we have confidence that the resurrection happened? But again, there is also a subjective element to it. The Holy Spirit again, this is from Romans 8, where Paul says, "*The Holy Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*"

And there's a third conviction that John speaks of in these verses, and it comes in just the words that he used. He talks about, "We've seen him, we've touched him, we've looked at him, we proclaim." And then he goes on to say, "We've seen it, and we testify." And then again, "We proclaim to you." And then in verse three, again, "We proclaim to you."

And this is how he understands the calling upon his life and the purpose of his life, to be those who testify to the work of Jesus, to the person of Jesus Christ. Again, Paul will talk about us being ambassadors, Christ ambassadors, God making his appeal through us. You see, the call upon our life is that our lives, not just our words, but our very lives, would be testimony, would testify to what we have heard and what we've seen and what we have touched.

That whatever we do in this life, that as we do it, that our words and our life will testify what we know to be true about Jesus Christ. You know, I think for all of us, this is so significant because it

means that our lives have purpose and they have meaning, and sometimes that's hard to hold onto, right? And sometimes that's hard to figure out. But our lives do have meaning, and they have purpose. We were created by God. We are known by him. We are loved by him, and we are all of those things for a reason. And that is to give glory to him and to testify to his goodness.

There is a calling upon your life. There is a calling upon my life. Whatever we do, testify to what we know to be true about Jesus Christ. You don't have to know it all. I don't have to know it all. But what we know about Jesus Christ, testify to that. If you know God's goodness in your life, testify to that. If you have this conviction of who Jesus Christ is, fully God, fully human, testify to that.

If you see God working in answer to prayer, testify to that. If you know salvation and forgiveness, if you experience joy in your life because of your faith in Christ, testify to that. And testify not just in words, but in the way in which you live and love. The way in which you walk. This is what I want to leave us before we head into the rest next week. And again, just a challenge. Please don't make Jesus less than what he is. He is fully God, and he is fully human.

Post-Sermon Prayer *Speaker: Stephen Bates*

Let me pray. So, father, we thank you for your truth. We thank you for your word and the way in which it speaks truth to us. And we thank you for Your Holy Spirit as he reveals truth to us. Father, I pray that these convictions that John starts with about who Jesus Christ is, who we are, and the call upon our lives, Lord, that these would be convictions for us as well, and that these would be the things that drive us in life, that we live out in every aspect of our lives, in our families, amongst our friends and our workplaces.

Lord, wherever it is, may we live these out and testify to the reality of who you are. Yeah, so Jesus Christ, we declare that you are Lord God over all, that you were there at the very beginning in creation and you continue to sustain all that there is. We thank you for your love that took you to the cross and how you suffered and died for us.

But we thank you and we praise you, Lord, that death itself could not hold you, but that you rose resurrected to life. And the promise is that we share in your identity. Christ in us, us in Christ, and that there is a joy that awaits. So father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you may be glorified in our lives and in this place. Amen, Amen.

Worship Singing

Song: Only A Holy God by Dustin Smith, Jonny Robinson, Michael Farren, Rich Thompson

Conclusion *Speaker: Reuben*

Thank you, Jesus, for who you are and who we are in you. We give you all the glory. Won't you lead us, empower us and send us forth this week, that we will be a light reflecting your glory. So help us, Lord, to love you, to love one another, to be more like you. We give you all the glory in Jesus' name, Amen.

All right. Can we thank the band this morning? I loved it. Big sound. Also, there'll be a prayer team up front, so please come forward. We want to stand with you in prayer. This morning, I was feeling that we want to pray for people with internal pain, but that's not the only thing we'll pray for, right? So do come forward. Have a great week, guys, and we'll see you soon.

Online Outro *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

Hey, thank you for joining us online today. We pray that you have been blessed and encouraged. And if there is something from today that you would like us to pray into with you, don't hesitate to let us know.

If we haven't met you, we'd love to hear from you. And you also welcome to come and join us in person as well. To know more about our church, please go to our church website and you can also find more details about who we are through our newsletter. And you can subscribe to that through our website as well.

God bless you and may you have a great week.

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*