

No Mere Myth

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- [0 : 0 0] You can be seated. We'll dismiss our kids to children's ministry. If you are visiting and aren't familiar with that procedure, Shannon, would you stay there just one second?
- Yeah, right there, just in case we have any kids that need to get out later. And if you'll open your Bibles to the book of 2 Timothy, chapter 4, we're going to be reading in verses 3 through 4 today.
- Now, at Providence, we like to work through books of the Bible, studying one section of the book to another. And we have reached the end of a series that has taken several months on the books of 1 and 2 Timothy.
- So this will be our last time in this book for a while. 2 Timothy 4, verses 3 through 4 says, Now, you might be thinking, Chris, that doesn't look like a super good Easter text.
- Well, hold on one moment. Because one of the things that this passage is stating implicitly is that Christianity is not a myth.
- [1 : 2 2] You see that in the text? Paul is predicting that some will leave the truth and wander off into myths. I want to talk about that a little bit today. I want to do three things with this text this morning.
- First one, to demonstrate that the basic claims of Christianity, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, are true historical events. Number two, to discuss why they are often doubted.
- And number three, to determine how believing in these things can affect our lives. One thing that is important to me these days, every year as we circle back to celebrating the resurrection of Christ, in a world of fake news and deep fakes and catfishing and AI and so on and so forth, I just really want to be helpful to you, at least once a year, to get your foot on absolute bedrock truth and reality.
- And one of the unfortunate facts or factors with kind of the religious environment is there's a lot of noise out there. And it can appear even to a well-meaning Christian that there's some kind of competition between the religions in which we're all trying to persuade you to put your faith into our particular claims.
- But I want to point out, as I try to do every year, that Christianity is just different in that respect. I was watching a debate between the atheist Richard Dawkins and the mathematician John Lennox.
- [3 : 0 0] And I so wish I could do his accent. He's got this nice English accent. He could read the Applebee's menu and sound profound, you know. But in response to Dawkins' assertion that kind of all faiths are relatively sort of just jockeying for some persuasion amongst the people, Lennox said this, Blind faith can be dangerous, especially if it is coupled with a blind obedience, especially when it's coupled with a blind obedience to an evil authority.
- Lennox says, And I would like to emphasize that this is true whether the blind obedience is that of religious or secular people.
- But not all faith is blind faith, because faith carries with it the ideas of belief, trust, commitment, and is therefore only as robust as the evidence for it.

I can't speak authoritatively for other religions. But faith in the Christian sense is not blind. And indeed, I do not know a serious person who thinks it is.

A serious Christian person who thinks it is. Indeed, as I read it, blind faith in idols and figments of the human imagination, in other words, delusional gods, is roundly condemned in the Bible.

[4 : 28] My faith in God and Christ as the Son of God is no delusion. It is rational and evidence-based.

Part of the evidence is objective, coming from science. Some comes from history. And some of it is subjective, coming from experience.

Lennox's claim, and the claim of our text, is that Christianity is not a mere myth, that it is actually true. And specifically, Lennox claims that there are historical realities that we can use to evaluate this central claim of Christianity.

That Jesus was alive, that he was crucified, that he was buried in a tomb, and that he rose from the grave. And so what I want to do, just at the front end of this message, I just feel a burden to do this every year, is to just remind you of how clearly these facts emerge from any reasonable or objective study.

How do we know that things that happened in the past are true? You know, the past is not actually kind of observable using the scientific method.

[5 : 47] Not really. How do we know anything happened in the past? Maybe more helpfully, how do historians differentiate between fact and fiction?

How do they know that one thing really happened and something else did not happen? Well, one method that they use is they look at the interval between the event that's being discussed and the time in which that event was reported.

And one of the most famous events in history, at least near the time of Christ, is the assassination of Caesar. It's supposed to have happened in 44 B.C.

All historians take this to be a real event. They believe this occurred. Now, in terms of the interval between the event itself and the first report of that event, the first report, the first written report we have of Caesar's assassination came 160 years after the assassination itself.

And honestly, remember back then, the recording of history was very slow and tedious. And honestly, 160 years, believe it or not, isn't a huge gap for historians.

[7 : 08] They believe these accounts, this particular account written by a man named Plutarch in 160 A.D. of Caesar's assassination, they believe the account is true.

They trust it. Another way to think of this is, okay, so what about with the resurrection? What is the gap between the event itself and the first recorded mentions of the event?

Now, remember that the gap between Caesar and Plutarch's recording of the event was 160 years. And what about the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Well, the first witnesses we see to the resurrection of Jesus Christ written down occurred 20 or 30 years after the event.

So from Caesar to Plutarch, we've got 160 years. From Jesus to Paul, we've got about 30 years. Now, there's another way that historians evaluate historical claims, and that is to see how many manuscripts appear that testify to this event.

How many copies of this recorded event do we have? Now, it might surprise you to know that our entire understanding of Caesar's assassination rests on the existence of 10 manuscripts.

[8 : 23] And yet, this is, of course, something that everyone believes, all historians believe. There's really no reason not to believe it. So how many manuscripts do we have recording this event that Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C.?

We have 10. Now, what about reports of the resurrection? Well, we have 23,986 manuscripts containing various portions of the New Testament.

One scholar, a man named Dan Wallace, wrote that he estimates that if you stacked all of the New Testament manuscripts on top of each other, you would have something taller than four Empire State Buildings.

In contrast, if you took all of the manuscripts regarding all of the classical Greek works and stacked those, you'd have something about four feet tall. Now, I was incredulous at this idea.

People say dumb things sometimes. And I would not bring you something that is kind of like Facebook post-y. So I had to go read Dan Wallace's math and examine, well, how did he come to this particular idea?

[9 : 36] And sure enough, he supports it with math. He supports this idea that we have this many New Testament manuscripts. So think about this for a moment.

This is going to be key as we progress. Everybody agrees, basically, that Caesar's assassination was a real thing. And yet the historical evidence for that is tiny compared to the same kinds of evidence reporting the resurrection of Jesus.

One author, I feel like a lot of these academics always undersell their case. This is one of those cases. One author said, the Gospels compare favorably to the classics in terms of what the sources say about Jesus and Caesar.

If such sourcing works for the classics in the study of Caesar, it should work for Jesus as well. They compare favorably. You've got four Empire State Buildings and a four-foot-tall thing.

They compare favorably. Yeah, I guess so. Well, in addition to this, and I'll just go quickly through this, we have this thing called the minimal facts argument. And I've been working on this for a number of years.

[10 : 46] And this is not original to me, but I keep adding to them. I've learned this from a professor named Gary Habermas. And there are these essential ideas related to the resurrection that kind of indicate that the physical resurrection of Jesus is the best explanation for what happened.

And let me just give you some of those evidences. Number one, it is simply taken as a given now by all credible historians of ancient antiquity that Jesus was a real historical person.

We also have plenty of evidence that he was crucified. And now, thanks to some morbid studies in the 1950s, let's say, we know that crucifixion leads to death 100% of the time.

We know that Jesus existed. We know that he was crucified. And we know that crucifixion leads to death 100% of the time. Many people claim to see and interact with Jesus after his death.

And some of those people were skeptics whose entire lives and careers and reputations were built around the idea that Jesus was not God, but who later became convinced by encountering Christ that he had indeed raised from the dead.

[12 : 01] Now, one of the more interesting pieces of evidence is that the message that Jesus was raised from the dead was taught immediately. If you've read any conspiracy fiction for the last 20 years, you might think that a bunch of men met in a smoke-filled room and hatched up the idea of the resurrection thousands of years after the event.

No, again, this is not something that only Christian historians agree to. All credible, mostly all historians agree that indeed the message of the resurrection was taught immediately following the event itself.

I can think of some of the most severe critics against Christianity who agree to all of the things I'm saying so far. Also, Paul was a real historical person considered by many, even skeptics today, to be of a formidable intellect.

And he wrote a letter, 1 Corinthians, that is believed by skeptics to be authentically written by Paul. And he said expressly that Jesus appeared to many witnesses, most of whom are still alive, when Paul wrote.

And Paul lists some so that folks could go and examine and ask those folks, did you really see Jesus? I think one of the more convincing arguments in this set of minimal facts is that you've got to remember that the message of the empty tomb was proclaimed in the town where the event took place.

[13 : 33] Why do I think that's convincing? Well, if I told you that a man had risen from the dead up the road, where shall we put him?

Let's put him at the Oak Park Mall. Guys, a man rose from the dead, the Oak Park Mall. He was laid to rest there. And there was a huge stone rolled in front of that retail store.

And the stone has been rolled away and the man is no longer there. Well, guess what would be easy for you to do? It would be easy for you to go and verify. So what we've got in a lot of these facts is this idea that the message of the resurrection happened immediately following the death of Jesus, the death and resurrection of Jesus.

It happened in a place where everyone would be able to question the witnesses who were named and investigate the tomb itself. And yet the message spread like wildfire. We also have, this is one of the ones that I've added in the past couple years, the details of the resurrection accounts, including the idea that many women found him first.

And that at the time is not what you would do to support a conspiracy claim. Because women were not at that time evaluated to be trustworthy witnesses.

[14 : 46] So if you're going to make a whole conspiracy about the resurrection, you certainly wouldn't make the first witnesses to the tomb, the one people who could not testify or believe that the one group of people who would not believe in their testimony.

So yeah, when Paul says that Christianity is true, you might think, just as an average consumer of religious information, well yeah, all the people say that.

Like all the religions say that. No, no, no. We're saying something very different here. We're not saying that if you believe hard enough, it will be true. Or that it can be true for you.

We're saying that the central teachings of Christianity are historical facts. I read recently of a reporter. She's an academic and also does some reporting in a college in North Carolina.

Well-known writer. Can't remember her name right now. But she was writing an article about a local church and went to the pastor of this local church. And he ended the conversation by saying, so what about you?

[15 : 48] What are you? Are you a Christian? Are you what? She said, oh, I think maybe one day I'll convert into something. But I'm really kind of nothing right now. And she's like, I'm just sorting through, you know, kind of treating religions like a buffet, you know, just trying to see the one that kind of best suits me.

And this pastor said, well, here's the thing, though. Christianity has verifiable facts that you can just investigate. And the facts are so extraordinary that if they're true, they kind of push Christianity to the front of the line.

And she's like, really? He's like, yeah. Are you willing to read some books? And she said, yeah, I'll read some books. And so he handed her, for instance, the 800-page volume from N.T. Wright and other books describing all of the evidence piece by piece of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

She read all of those books and converted to Christianity just recently, 2022. So what we want to start the conversation with is this stuff is actually true.

And now let's pivot into this second question, which is probably the more interesting one in some respects. And that is, if there is so much data proving this event occurred, why would we find a great number of people who believed in something less supported, like the assassination of Caesar, why would we find so few people believe in the resurrection of Jesus if the evidence is so strong?

[17:11] And that gets us back to our text. Look at verse 3 with me of 2 Timothy chapter 4. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching.

The word for endure there is interesting. We'll get back to that in a moment. Sound teaching means true teaching, solid, factual teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Broadly speaking, this text is telling us that there is a fundamental tension between the truths of Christianity and the passions of the flesh.

That's the fundamental tension. We're answering a question. Why don't more people accept the facts of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? And this text offers explanatory value.

It's not so much that people are not persuaded by the evidence, but rather that this particular evidence demands a verdict. And it demands a very personal and life-altering verdict.

[18:27] Does that make sense? This word for endure, the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching. That's just a strange statement if you think about it.

Because I'm not sure most facts that I encounter on a daily basis have to be endured. The truth of Caesar's assassination requires no endurance on my part that I can see.

I don't see how photosynthesis! or a second law of thermodynamics is something I have to endure. Although I guess I kind of have to endure the second law. I guess I kind of am enduring the second law of thermodynamics.

But as far as I can see, there's a lot of truth, true things that I don't have to endure. You know what I mean? It's not hard on me. I'm well aware of my lack of endurance in general every time I try to take a jog.

I get what endurance means. I get I don't have a lot of it. But for the most part, the truth that we encounter doesn't require us to endure it. It just is.

[19:31] Paul is saying something different. There's something different about the Christian truths. They carry a burden. They add a burden to us. They are something we have to endure.

The main problem, the text says, is our passions. Look at the text again. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

What we're talking about, the tension between the truth of the resurrection of Jesus and our passions. What does that mean? What is a passion? Well, the Greek word is used over 30 times and it refers to anything that is kind of lustful or sinful or craving in nature.

And there's all kinds of passions listed in the New Testament. Some of them are sexual in nature. Some of them are materialistic. One of the places this Greek word appears is in 1 Timothy where it says that people have an urge, a passion to grow rich.

A lot of passions, especially the ones that got Christ on the cross, a lot of passions are for human approval, power, position, reputation, station, and so forth.

[20 : 59] And the Bible clearly teaches us that when those passions are in the driver's seat, our eyes are blinded from seeing the truth. That those passions actually have an effect on our capacity to reason.

And it actually pushes our mind into a kind of futility in which we can't even see the facts as they actually are. That's why the belief in the resurrection is so uneven compared to the belief in the assassination of Caesar.

Assassination of Caesar isn't telling me I have to stop sleeping with my girlfriend. Right? The famous American reporter, by the way, I'm married, and I don't have a girlfriend.

My wife's sitting there just like... A famous American reporter. Have you all ever read a book? This was a book assigned to when I was a kid called *The Jungle*. It's a horrific book written by this man named Upton Sinclair.

And he would take on corruption over and over again in various realms. He's famous for saying this. Listen to this quote. I think it explains why... I think it gives us the answer to this question.

[22 : 11] It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it. Just think about that for a moment.

We're trying to answer if the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is as clear as I just said it is, why don't more people believe in it? And the answer is this.

But I would reframe it. It is difficult to get a man to accept facts when his passions force him to deny those facts.

Back at the text again, there's this interesting phrase I want to draw to your attention. It says, For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.

What does he mean by itching ears? We can't say for sure. There's basically two options. One option is that they want to hear things that satisfy their urges.

[23 : 19] They want to hear things that endorse their urges. You ever have like an itch right in the middle of your back where your little T-Rex arms don't fit? It's something like that.

That could be the idea of this text. They want their itches scratched and the truth of Jesus won't scratch them. But there's another way of thinking about it that also seems possible and that is that the gospel is actually creating the itch.

Some of the language here in the Greek almost has this idea that their ears are being irritated. And so then you would just say, well, the truth of Christianity, the central claims of Christianity, the cross and resurrection of Jesus are bothering them.

You know, so one way of putting it would be the gospel isn't satisfying their urges and another way of saying it would be the gospel is irritating to them because of their urges. So as Michael Scott would say, it's basically potato tomato.

The basic thrust of the text is something like this. Christianity is based on a set of facts. I almost said Christianity is based.

[24 : 35] Christianity is based on a set of facts. Our passions compete with those facts. Three, we have to choose between our facts, we have to choose between the facts and our feelings.

things. Isn't that usually the way it goes? Isn't it always kind of coming down to deciding whether we will lean on the Lord and trust him in our, trust the Lord or lean on our own understanding?

Isn't that kind of like always the problem? You know, let's just, let's just want to comment on this word passions for a moment. You talk about a word that has like really changed over the years.

What does passion mean to the average person in America now? It means like something that they're enthusiastic about. It means like something they're super into, like yoga is my passion.

Obviously, you know, yeah. Have you heard this thing that yoga is like demonic? I think it's true because I tried to do it and the Holy Spirit like froze my joints and I couldn't.

[25 : 48] So, so nowadays this idea of passion is just stuff that we're into. Around the 14th century, passion was like the thing that kept you from being logical.

But originally, like early, early, early church, the Latin speaking church, passion meant suffering and they used it to refer to Jesus and the cross. that's why the movie is called The Passion of Jesus Christ.

So, what an interesting kind of way of describing our culture right now. It's like, which passion is most central to us? The things, our urges, the things that we do and want to do to feel good or the cross of Jesus Christ?

in a sense, like what's going on in this text is that every single person who knows the basic claims of the gospel is forced to choose between the passion of Christ or the passion of the flesh.

There's this phrase going around in the world of like neuroscience and clinical psychology and stuff like that. The phrase needed to be invented because of a crisis that has crashed upon our culture and that is the crisis of dopamine seeking behaviors.

[27 : 19] Addictions abound. Take 30 minutes describing, listing them. So, they're trying to describe like why are people engaged in these repetitive dopamine seeking behaviors and the phrase that they're using to describe this is the hedonic treadmill.

The hedonic treadmill. Hedonic means pleasure seeking. It's where we get the word hedonism from. And treadmill, the idea that it is a road to nowhere.

It is activity without accomplishment. punishment. The people who can't accept the facts of Christianity, it's not that the lack of evidence is the problem, it's that the evidence demands they get off the hedonic treadmill.

People stuck on the hedonic treadmill foolishly believe, this is crazy, that true happiness lies just around the corner. The only problem is there are no corners.

they're on a treadmill. Sometimes at the gym, just for fun, I think I'll get up on the treadmill next to someone and start walking as they walk and just turn over them and say, so where are you headed today?

[28 : 42] But, you know, if you ask someone on the hedonic treadmill that question, they'll say to happiness. They really think they're just one orgasm, one Oreo, one more cup of alcohol away from happiness.

And they keep walking and walking and walking. And friends, like, I think it's obvious, but we can't follow Jesus if we're on the hedonic treadmill.

And when people are faced with the facts of Jesus as I presented them, the main objection to these facts, however, whatever is externalized, the main objection is simply this, but what about my favorite pleasure?

What about my favorite pleasure? I love making money. I love this sexual addiction that I have.

I love gossip. I love these things. things. And you know, you know, if you were to follow Jesus, if you were to follow where the facts lead you to follow, you'd have to stop walking in those things.

[30 : 00] And the thing is, I'd just like to remind you, that would be great for you. it would be great to get off the hedonic treadmill. It would be great to see the addictions in the rearview mirror.

It would be great to see the control obsession in the rearview mirror. It would be great if you laid down your sins to follow Jesus. That's no sacrifice at all.

But the bummer thing about pleasures is that they're kind of drama queens. And they tell you that you can't live without that thing.

Or that you can't beat that thing. But the basic facts that we've already argued are indeed facts, say otherwise. This is why Jesus died.

Jesus died to get people off the hedonic treadmill. This morning we have a wide variety of people, men and women, boys and girls, young adults, older, less young adults.

[31 : 09] And in spite of all of this variance, I can just tell you point blank, there are two kinds of people in the room, those that are caught on this treadmill to nowhere and those that were caught on this treadmill to nowhere.

That's it. That's all this room is full of, people who are on the treadmill and people who were on the treadmill. What accounts for the difference? Why are some no longer on the treadmill?

Well, I want to be super clear. It is not because they are smarter or more spiritual or more sensitive or because their sin was any less addictive to them.

They are off the treadmill because Jesus Christ saved them. rescued them. One of Jesus' great joys is pronouncing, I have come to proclaim release for the captives.

That's also a fact. You see, there are many people in this room, if all the evidence about the resurrection, maybe you're not a big, you know, facts person in general.

[32 : 13] It's like, I get that. Maybe you're more of an experienced person. Okay, here's what I would tell you. I could point to dozens of people in this room right now who have lived the experience I'm describing, who were walking on the hedonic treadmill.

Some of them had more interesting desires than others, but I could literally call on dozens of people who would hate me forever, by the way, to have them stand up and testify, but I could call on dozens of people in this room right now who were on this treadmill.

The facts meant nothing to them. The facts of Jesus meant nothing to them. They might have even said they believed in them, but they hadn't placed their faith in them. And so if all of the archaeological and all the manuscript evidence isn't enough for you, well, maybe you need to realize that just with a snap of a finger, dozens of people in this room would stand up and say, Jesus got me off the endless path.

Jesus got me off the road to nowhere. There's a verse in Titus 2. I think about this when I think about these saints that I walk with as pastor at Providence.

Titus 2, verse 11, for the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

[33 : 43] I'm seeing people being trained by the Lord, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works.

Plenty of people in this room who woke up to find Jesus taking them off of that dumb road to nowhere.

But is there anybody in the room this morning who is still on that road? how would you process that?

Is anyone here still churning out those miles, caught in the delusion that satisfying your passions is the point of your life?

still fooled into believing that happiness lies just around the next corner and there really are no corners.

[35 : 04] There's no hope in that life. hope in life. Is there anyone here who is living to coin an old phrase from another time, a myth of progress?

A myth of progress. There's no real progress. You just think that another pair of shoes or another tender date or another drink or whatever will get you somewhere, but you know deep down that's not true.

That's all a myth. But here's what's true. This account that I referred to earlier is coming 30 years or so after the resurrection of Jesus was written by Paul in the book of 1 Corinthians.

And he says this, and this is what's true. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas and then to the twelve and then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, you can go and check, though some have fallen asleep.

Then he appeared to James and then to all the apostles. Here's what's true. The myth of progress. The lie of the hedonic treadmill.

[36 : 31] That's not true. Here's what's true. Christ died for your sins. He was buried and he was raised on the third day. The Bible has another name, which you might describe as death.

Death, which you might describe as the state of uninterrupted degeneration, which is where you are when you are caught in your passions. sins.

And in Ephesians 2 we're told that we were dead in our trespasses and sins in which we once walked following the course of the world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and we're by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you've been saved. And he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

[37 : 58] For by grace you've been saved through faith, and it is not of your own doing, it is the gift of God. Nobody in this room who's been saved from that treadmill would ever boast in being saved.

They would literally say that the facts of Jesus, facts worthy of a whole life of faith, were hidden from their eyes until the Lord God reached in and plucked them out of that terrible dungeon.

God, why don't we end our time with just a brief moment of prayer. Would you bow your heads with me? Just in as sincere and caring a way as I can say it, where are you right now?

Describe two places, two ways of living, two walks. things, I just want to let you know that you can leave this building today standing on the solid ground of real history, having exited the myth, the myth of passion-driven life.

Are you still stuck on the treadmill? Well, Jesus died to set you free. And as surely as he is risen from the dead, he will take you out of your own spiritual death and raise you to walk in abundant life.

[39 : 23] Lord God, you say in your word in 2 Corinthians that Jesus died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

As I was praying this morning, I was reminded of Paul speaking to the passion- captivated pagans of Athens. and he says something to the effect, Lord, of you know, your times of ignorance, the Lord has overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day on which he will judge all people and that he has left a witness that this is coming by raising Jesus from the dead.

So, Father, we just pray that those in the room who would say, I want to stop living a pleasure-centered life.

Lord, would you help them to call upon the name of Jesus and be saved, to understand that their sin debt has been paid for with the death of Jesus Christ, Christ, and that a new life awaits them as they follow Christ out of the grave?

Lord, would you give them confidence, help them to stop being distracted about pretending as if Christianity was just a peer of the other religions in this world?

[40 : 58] It's not. It's not. Help them to see that this is a faith built on certain verifiable historical things, among which are that Jesus was a person, he was crucified, and a whole lot of people believed he was raised from the dead, and those people were willing to die for that belief.

You see, Lord, I know that that's where this always leads. You say that if anyone wants to be my disciple, let him take up his cross, deny himself, and follow you. Father, I just pray you would help folks to see that that is by far, by far the easier and more joy-filled course in life.

Father God, do your work in our hearts today. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Stand with me. Let's sing. Well, we are going to sing, Is He Worthy?

which is what our kids opened up the service with today. So this is a call and response song. So your response will be on the screen, and Josh will be leading that response for you.

But as Chris was saying, there's darkness, right? There's darkness in the world. There's pleasures that are, they encase themselves and tend to trick us, right?

[42 : 30] But the song says, do you feel the shadows deepen? Do you know, though, that all the dark won't stop the light from getting through?

And do you wish that you could see it all made new? Guys, we're singing to a God who has ransomed his people. Revelation chapter five, verse nine says, they sang a new song saying, worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals.

for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

That is the God we are singing to. That is the God we serve. So let's sing. Amen.