

Sermon - Inconceivable

Is this logic true....

I believe I am successful – therefore I am successful.

I believe I will prevail – therefore I prevail.

I believe in God – therefore there is a God.

If I believe in something strong enough, does my belief somehow shape the resulting situation, reality, event?

We have all seen the athlete being interviewed who tells us that they just believed they could do it, and so they won the race; We have also seen the successful entrepreneur who tells us the same thing, “I believed I could do it, that is why I am successful”; Late night infomercials prod us the same way, encouraging us to believe we can....and it will be so.

In downtown San Antonio sits the Alamodome, a 65,000 seat facility that opened in 1993 for a cost of 186 million. Following the field of dreams philosophy, the city, eager to have a professional football franchise pushed to complete the Texas size facility, “if you build it, they will come”. This huge facility has the ability to host several events at once.

If we believe it strong enough, if we believe it long enough, if we believe, our faith will make it happen.

Apparently not. This month at the Alamodome you could see a monster truck show, a boat show, or the national championship of cheerleading, but you can't see a professional football game. Over 20 years since the Alamodome's conception and San Antonio has failed to attract a professional football team...

I run into people who tell me that they used to be Christians, but they gave up, because, “it doesn't work”. These folks say they had believed, well, they tried to believe...and if our conversation goes on, I will find out that prayers were said, that weren't answered, hopes never came to fruition, people died, failures ensued, disappointment reigned. It breaks my heart to hear these kind of stories.

The classic test an atheist will give to prove there is no God is this: “If there is a God, let him, kill me right now”. When nothing happens, they will confidently claim, “See there is no God, for I am still alive and well.” Now if we were to ask the atheist, “What if someone came up to you at this very moment and shoot you? Would that prove that there is a God?” “No, of course not”, the atheist would respond, “God has to do it himself”.

Oh, I see how it is.

We set the parameters of the possible results, we set the goals that must be achieved, we set the process to work out the results...so when events happen, or when events don't happen THEN we know our faith is real, or not, THEN we know if something is real or not.

In the early days of the church thousands of Christians were chased down, enslaved, imprisoned and murdered – Was their faith not real, was their faith not strong enough, because things obviously didn't work out for them. Today in Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Christians are enslaved, imprisoned and murdered – Is their faith not real enough, is their faith not strong enough, because clearly, things are not working out for them either...

Our faith. Our belief.

When you and I believe, what does it mean?
Let's turn to our Scripture today, 1 John 1:1-4.

The Apostle John is writing us concerning our faith. John is now quite old, probably in his 90's and is perhaps the last surviving disciple of Jesus. This book was written about 50 or 60 years after Jesus death and resurrection. John also wrote the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation.

John, he was one of the sons of Zebedee, "the sons of thunder" along with his brother James. He was probably a pretty intense man. Originally a fisherman who spoke what was on his mind, John along with Peter and James, formed Jesus' inner circle, in fact John was most certainly Jesus' favorite and the closest one to Jesus during his time here on earth.

Here is a man who knows what he is talking about when he talks to us about Jesus. Personal knowledge, firsthand knowledge, long term knowledge – what is John's take on belief in Jesus? John tells us that Jesus is more real than we can ever imagine.

These first four verses of the book of 1 John, actually, they are one long and very complicated single sentence. This is a very difficult sentence to translate from the Greek into English. In many English translations, work very hard in an attempt to have this sentence make sense in English. What we have here is very difficult and very complex. But because of the complexity here, we have great insight into the meaning of faith.

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In some translations the word “proclaim” is added to verse one. This is added because it makes the verse less abstract. The translation we read this morning, the NIV, did this, it adds the word “proclaim” to verse one – but the word “proclaim” is not there in verse one in the original Greek. By adding the word proclaim the NIV can make verse one appear to be primarily about the message, but, in reality, verse one is primarily about the person of Jesus Christ – and here is our first understanding underlying our faith: WHO.

Who do you believe in? Who do you place your faith in? Who is primary in this passage this morning. Who comes first. Who, is what matters most. In fact in the original Greek here it says literally “Who from the beginning....who we have heard...who we have seen....touched...this concerning the word of life ”

Who?

This is not philosophical, this is not theoretical, this is not metaphysical – this is as practical and as daily grind as it gets. The “we” we see referenced here in this verse is a direct reference to the disciples of Jesus Christ. So it is we the disciples who experienced these things....John may be an old man, he may have been around the block a few times, but John was there, he was there in real time and space. John is telling us that he saw Jesus – not only did John see Jesus as a person, that Jesus was a historical person who lived in time and space within history – but John saw how Jesus lived and acted, and more importantly, John saw WHO Jesus was...and is.

John fills this thought in by telling us that not only did he see who Jesus is, but he heard and touched who Jesus is. John experienced the full aspects of who Jesus was here on earth.

Notice, right there at the beginning of the verse “Who from the beginning” (as it should say directly from the Greek). Place your finger in your bible and turn to the Gospel of John, chapter one verse one. Read along with me, [John 1:1](#) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John is writing a parallel thought both here in chapter one of the Gospel of John and in the book of 1 John chapter one.

Who?

The Word, “ha Logos”, that’s who.

Flipping back to first John, we see repeated, Who, Who, Who....then he tells us Who – right there at the end of the first verse – who? The word of life, that’s who.

Jesus Christ, there at the beginning, Jesus, by His word creates, Jesus, by His word gives life, Jesus, by His word gives life to creation, Jesus by His word gives new spiritual life to those who believe. Before there was – Jesus is.

What do you believe?

Your belief, your faith – be it strong, be it weak, be it long term, be it a spark forming in you right now as we speak – your faith, your belief, in what way does it make Jesus who he is? In what way, whether you believe or not, in what way does your faith change who Jesus is.

Jesus is, always has been.

What you believe?

No, Who. Who do you believe? Who is at the very core of things. Without the who, there is no what. Without the who, there is not much to believe in.

Concerning this word of life John writes there in verse 2, the life was “revealed”. In the Greek John conveys this image of something that has always been there, something that has never been absent – but now is known by John and the disciples. It did not happen by chance; John did not stumble upon it, but he was chosen to be one who it was revealed to. The curtain was pulled aside, the sunglasses were removed, the light was illuminated – and there He was, the one who always has been, there was never a time or place without Him.

Some translations say that He “appeared” this may give the impression of some kind of a random event or that Jesus was not in control. Jesus didn’t just appear – poof – No, Jesus planned with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit and took purposeful action, and with purpose chose to call certain men and women to Him, an action chosen from before time. Jesus revealed himself, Jesus was fully in control of every aspect of what happened,.

Consider this: How powerful is your faith?

Rather, consider this: How powerful is WHO you place your belief in?

Me, myself and I. Jesus Christ.

Who am I really placing my faith in?

It is easy to believe when things are going well. However, it is when times get bleak, when the answer doesn’t arrive, then, that is when you see WHO you believe.

Me, myself and I. Jesus Christ.
Who am I really placing my faith in?

John tells us this life, the person of Jesus is so great, that He cannot be measured – Jesus is so great, He is infinity plus one, He is eternal. Jesus is so awesome that He transcends time and space. Jesus defies the laws of physics. Jesus defies our categorization, Jesus defies our terms, our rules, our calculations, our limited analytical process.

Yet John experienced what was and is inconceivable – this all powerful, immeasurable, Word of life was revealed to us he says – We saw, we heard, we in fact touched – He was human, yet He was God. Eternal, creator, light of life, yet we had fellowship with Him.

What do I believe in? What I believe in is WHO and who it is, is none other than Jesus Christ.

Now here in verse 3 of this very long sentence we finally see that word proclaim in the Greek. John has told us who, the Word of life, this eternal life, he has told us that the who is Jesus Christ and now he tells us why – Why? So that we may have fellowship.

See, the existence of Jesus Christ, this awesome creator who defies even the confines of time and space, the existence is one thing, but to have fellowship, that is quite another thing.

I can know of the existence of Jesus Christ, and so can you, but remember, John is not writing about the what, He is writing about the who. In Christianity WHAT we believe is important, but if there is no fellowship with the WHO, then there is no point in the what.

Fellowship here means specifically what John expects us to have in common. In using this word John is trying to convey two elements to us: First there is the element of participation with each other in Christian service, in other words supporting each other in Christ; Second, and this is more important, is the element of a common spiritual privilege we have been given, in other words, we also, those of us who have become Christians, have in common this revelation of who Jesus Christ is and this revelation gives us fellowship.

This fellowship is further defined. Do you see what it is in verse 3? John and his fellow disciples, their fellowship is with Jesus Christ and the Father and so when we believe, remember not in the “what”, but in the “who”, when we believe we also have fellowship

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with God the Father and God the Son. By our acceptance we become and remain partners, both spiritual and otherwise.

John, by linking God the Father and God the Son together makes a very powerful and very unpopular statement which he will reinforce further in this book: To have fellowship with God the Father you must have fellowship with the Son, Jesus Christ.

To be clear, so that we have no misunderstanding this morning, John is saying, and he is saying without a doubt, that to know God, you must know Jesus Christ. If you are not a follower of Jesus, you cannot know God. To know God is to know Jesus, to know Jesus is to know God. Outside of these parameters, that are set by God, and not by us, outside of these parameters one cannot know God.

I know for a fact that there are a number who are here this morning who find those words unappealing, bigoted, politically incorrect. You cannot swallow that there is no faith outside of Jesus Christ. People all over the world claim to have faith, people all over the world claim to believe in.....who?

Is it the what that matters, or the who?

I'm just telling you what it says here. Written by the man who saw, heard, touched, was held in confidence, and was the closest person to Jesus Christ in the entire history of humankind. One cannot have a true relationship with God while rejecting Jesus. The what of faith does not exist without the who of faith. Without the who, there is no what.

See, there is a spiritual reality, and I believe it or I don't believe it. That spiritual reality is that Jesus Christ is that spiritual reality – and other spiritual realities are not, they do not exist. John strongly emphasizes to see, to hear and to touch because he wants us to know that we are to believe in who is, not in what might be.

Let's take another look at the logic I started with at the beginning of the sermon:
I believe in the person of Jesus Christ – therefore I am successful beyond what is current happening in me life, and will be ultimately successful in eternity.

I believe in the person of Jesus Christ – therefore not even the gates of Hell prevail, against me.

I believe in the person of Jesus Christ – and because I believe in the who, that is the person of Jesus Christ, my joy will be made complete.