First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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The Testimony of God
1 John 5:6-13

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- Do you believe that Christopher Columbus sailed to the Americas in 1492? I do.
- Do you believe the Declaration of Independence was primarily written by Thomas Jefferson? I do.
- Do you believe the sun is "a gigantic nuclear furnace where hydrogen is built into helium at a temperature of millions of degrees?" I do.

As far as I know, no one in this room has actually witnessed any of those things in person. None of us was alive for Columbus's trans-Atlantic journey or the writing of the Declaration of Independence. I don't personally know anyone who has visited the sun to make sure what we believe about it is true. The vast majority of things we believe are things we haven't directly witnessed. So, why would we be willing to believe them? Essentially, we believe because someone we think is trustworthy says they are true. C. S. Lewis referred to this as "believing things on authority."

"Don't be scared by the word authority. Believing things on authority only means believing them because you've been told them by someone you think trustworthy. Ninety-nine per cent of the things you believe are believed on authority. I believe there is such a place as New York. I haven't seen it myself. I couldn't prove by abstract reasoning that there must be such a place. I believe it because reliable people have told me so…Every historical statement in the world is believed on authority. None of us has seen the Norman Conquest or the defeat of the Armada. None of us could prove them by pure logic as you prove a thing in mathematics. We believe them simply because people who did see them have left writings that tell us about them: in fact, on authority. A man who jibbed at authority in other things as some people do in religion would have to be content to know nothing all his life." - C. S. Lewis

Whether it's history or philosophy or automotive repair, we build most of our thinking on the testimonies of reliable people.

And that's what the next passage in our study of 1 John is about. John has been calling us to believe in Jesus – that He is the Christ (or One Anointed of God, the One God promised to send to redeem people from sin) and that He is the Son of God. John doesn't expect us to take those things on blind faith. He calls us to believe them based on the testimony of the most reliable and authoritative person in all of existence – God Himself. The claim of John and is that Almighty God has testified to the true identity of Jesus. That's the focus of our text today.

Big Idea: The testimony of God the Father should strengthen our faith in the truth about God the Son.

1 John 5:6–13
This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. 9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. 10 Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not

believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. 11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.
13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

This text is all about THE TESTIMONY OF GOD THE FATHER about Jesus. The word "testify" or "testimony" occurs 8 times in our text. Verse 9 says that all of this testimony is ultimately from God and His testimony is greater than the testimony of men. In other words, if we are willing to build our beliefs about history and science and philosophy on the testimony of men, then how much more should we be willing to believe the testimony of God the Father about His Son, Jesus?

And in verse 8, John says the Father has testified primarily through the Spirit as well as the water and the blood. Now, before we dig into what John means by the Spirit, the water, and the blood, it's important to know that before John wrote this letter, he wrote his Gospel account of the life of Jesus. And it's almost certain that the recipients of 1 John were the first recipients of the Gospel of John. So, in this letter, John is building on the foundation he laid in his Account of the life of Jesus.

John 20:31
but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

The entire Gospel of John is written so that we will believe the truth about who Jesus. And the entire letter of 1 John is written so that we will know the blessing of eternal life that comes through believing the truth about Jesus. So, these two books of the Bible go together. The Gospel of John serves as a foundation of truth that John builds upon in the letter. And that's very much happening in our text this morning. Our text is built on a foundation of truth that John established in his Gospel. Specifically, in his account of the life of Jesus, John meticulously documents the different forms of testimony that point to the truth identity Jesus – the Christ, the Son of God.

<u>Testimony #1: The Old Testament Scriptures</u>

John 5:39
You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,

The word translated "bear witness" is the same word translated "testifies" in our text. Jesus said the entire Old Testament is testifying to the truth that Jesus is the Christ, or the Messiah, and the Son of God. There are hundreds of prophesies in the Old Testament about Jesus. They bear witness to the true identity of Jesus.

<u>Testimony #2: John the Baptist</u>

John 1:6–7
There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

John the Baptist was sent from God to prepare the way for Jesus by testifying that He was the Christ.

<u>Testimony #3: The Apostles</u>

John 15:26–27

But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

The Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and given the ability and authority to testify to the truth about Jesus. That's why John says this…

1 John 4:6
We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

The testimony of the Apostles is recorded in the New Testament Scriptures. It's the authoritative word from God that reveals the truth about Jesus. It's the final authority on what is true and what is error.

Testimony #4: The Words of Jesus

John 8:14
Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going...

John 8:18
I am the one who bears witness about myself…

The words of Jesus tell us who Jesus is. He claimed to be the Christ and the Son of God. We talked about this a little last week. The reason the religious leaders rejected Jesus was because He claimed to be the Son of God in a way that made Him equal with God.

Testimony #5: The Works of Jesus

John 5:36
But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.

Jesus didn't just talk about being the Christ or being God, He did works that proved He is the Christ and God in the flesh. He forgave people of their sins. Only God can do that. He exercised authority over the laws of nature by performing miracles. Only God can do that.

Testimony #6: God the Holy Spirit

John 15:26
"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

The Holy Spirit testifies to the truth of who Jesus is. The Spirit inspired the Apostles to record the very word of God in the New Testament. He also moves in the hearts and minds of people to this very day, convincing people of the truth about Jesus.

1 Corinthians 2:12–13
Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

The Holy Spirit takes the truth about Jesus in the Word of God and enables people to understand.

Testimony #7: God the Father

John 5:37
And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me.

So, there are seven layers of testimony that John says testify together concerning the true identity of Jesus. Ultimately, all of it is from God. The Spirit is God. Jesus is God. The Old Testament is the Word of God. John the Baptist was sent by God. The Apostles were chosen and empowered by God. And all their testimony agrees to the truth about Jesus.

John doesn't ask us to believe in Jesus out of blind faith. He calls us to believe the testimony of God. And these things weren't ancient history to the original recipients of John's writing. He and hundreds of others were eye-witnesses to all those events. And John is saying that all those events are more than just the testimony of eye-witness like the Apostles. They are the testimony of God Himself. And that brings us back to our text.

1 John 5:6-8
And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

What does John mean here? We know the Spirit is a reference to the Holy Spirit. But what about the water and the blood? This is a widely debated passage. Some think it refers to the water and blood that came out of Christ's body when He was pierced by the spear of the Roman soldier. Others believe it is a reference to the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. I believe the water refers to the baptism of Jesus and the blood refers to the events surround the death of Jesus.
That interpretation seems to best fit what John is saying here.

At the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit of God descended on Jesus and the voice of God the Father spoke, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:9-11; John 1:29-34) So, the Spirit and the Father testified about the truth of Jesus at His baptism.

In the events surrounding the death of Jesus, God affirmed the identity of Christ in multiple ways. Just before Jesus went to the cross, God the Father spoke again concerning Jesus. (John 12:29-32) While Jesus was on the cross, darkness blocked the sun in the middle of the day (Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33, Luke 23:44-45), an earthquake shook the ground (Matthew 27:51), the veil of the temple was torn in two (Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45) , and people were raised from the dead (Matthew 27:52-53). God the Father was testifying to the truth about Jesus. He is the Christ, the Son of God.

This testimony was so powerful that one of the Roman soldiers who had been part of crucifying Jesus was converted at the foot of the cross. (Matthew 27:54, Mark 15:39, Luke 23:47)

Matthew 27:54
When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Jesus is the Son of God, the second person of the trinity. He came as the Christ, or the Anointed One of God who would save God's people through His perfect life, death, and resurrection.

And that's not just the claim of modern-day scholars or religious fanatics or first-Century zealots. John says that's the claim of Almighty God. The Bible isn't simply a collection of moral principles or best practices for people to live by. The Bible isn't a collection of life lessons that help you improve your marriage or deal with your stress or raise balanced, well-adjusted kids. The claim of the Bible is that it is the written testimony of God Himself that is all about Jesus.

And John's not messing around with this. Look at verse 10:

1 John 5:10
Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.

John says the world is essentially divided into two different groups. There are those who receive the testimony of God about Jesus. The other group are those who reject the testimony of God about Jesus. And John says to do that is to call God a liar.

And that's the hard-hitting point of this passage of Scripture. Everything about our lives and our relationship with God comes down to this one question: Do you genuinely believe the truth about Jesus?

He is either who the Bible says He is, the Christ and God the Son, or He is an imposter and the Bible is to be rejected. This world and philosophers of this age may try to convince you that there is some middle ground that considers the Bible to be helpful but not authoritative. They might say that Jesus is a great man and the world's best teacher, but He isn't God and the only Savior. But the actual teaching of the Bible leaves no room for that middle ground. Jesus is who the Bible says He is or the Bible is the figment of men's imaginations or, worse yet, the greatest deception in the history of the world. There is no middle ground.

That's the testimony of God and all of the reliable witnesses He has given to the truth about Jesus. Do you genuinely believe the truth about Jesus? Are you trusting in Him as your Savior and your God?

If you do, John has great news for THOSE WHO BELIEVE THE TRUTH.

1 John 5:11-13
And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

The testimony of God isn't just truth about Jesus. It's truth about us. If we place our faith and trust in Jesus, God says we have eternal life as God's gracious gift to us in Jesus.

Eternal life isn't just a never-ending extension of our lives on this earth. Given our current rate of decay, eternity in this world the way it is would not be heaven in any sense of the word. Having eternal life means we will enter the eternal presence of God to finally and fully experience life the way God intended it to be. It means we will see God face to face and enjoy His presence forever. It means receiving a new heaven and earth with new bodies fit to last forever. It means we will lay aside all the sin and sorrow of this present age and take up the fullness of joy and pleasure forevermore that God has prepared for us. It means we will serve God forever in perfect relationship

with Him and all those who join us in His presence. It means we will spend eternity discovering more and more of God's immeasurable grace and experience new expressions of His kindness to us. But eternal life isn't just something we are waiting for. John says it's something we have right now because it's part of the abundant, victorious, resurrection life Jesus provides for those who trust in Him. Life is found in Jesus. He is Life itself. And if you have the Son, you have life. Here and now.

That's the testimony of God. And just think about how believing you have eternal life impacts the way you live here and now. Knowing you have Eternal life…

1. Removes fear about your future.
When you know you have eternal life, your ultimate future isn't in doubt. Your future is glorious. You don't have to be afraid of what is going to happen to you or the stock market. No matter what, your last chapter is better than you can imagine and is guaranteed in Christ.

2. Frees you from performance-driven religion
Countless people are caught in the trap of performance-driven religion. They are trying to earn their way into heaven and God's blessings on this earth. Constantly trying to get on God's good side. It's an endless cycle of fear and guilt and the paranoia of wondering if you've ever done enough. But, you don't have to live like that. Eternal life is a gift we have in Christ.

3. Reorients your value-system
When you think about your life being eternal, it causes the things of this world to shrink in their worth and importance. Who cares about a car that you'll only have 10 years when you are going to live forever? Who cares about getting new appliances that will only last 6 months because no one knows how to make the old-fashioned appliances like my grandma's that lasted 40 years? Living in light of eternity shifts your focus and values. It isn't that the things of this world are wrong, it's just that they aren't ultimate when you will live forever with the Lord.

4. Strengthens you to endure suffering
One of the primary ways I make it through dentist appointments is by telling myself two things: "This isn't meaningless – something good and worthwhile is happening." "It will be over soon." Those two things help me get through the pain of dental visits. And on an infinitely more important scale, knowing we have eternal life strengthens us to endure suffering in this life. Passages like Romans 8:18 and 2 Corinthians 4:16-28 say the suffering of this life is producing a glorious thing in us that will last forever. Having eternal life means suffering isn't meaningless and it will all be over soon.

5. Compels you to live on mission
If anyone can have eternal life through Jesus, then no mission matters more than sharing the truth about Jesus. When you know that life lasts forever in Christ and heaven is waiting on you, you are less controlled by what others think about you and more compelled by love and compassion for them. Like Paul, you aren't ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God to salvation for those who will believe the truth about Jesus.

I could go on and on, but the point is that our day-to-day lives and our eternal destinies are changed by knowing we have eternal life in Christ. And the way you know you have eternal life is by believing the truth about Jesus. He who has the Son, has life. But whoever does not have the Son does not have life.

That's the testimony of God Himself. Do you believe it? Are you trusting in Christ as your Lord and Savior?