

“Committed”
Acts 1:15-17; 1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19

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Have you ever seen the movie “Harvey”? That’s an older movie with Jimmy Stewart. It’s a fun movie because all through it he is talking to a big white rabbit. Now if I’m remembering right, we don’t ever get to see the rabbit. And so there’s always the question whether the rabbit is really there or not. In fact during the movie they decide at one point, Jimmy Stewart’s character must be committed. He must be insane; he’s talking to this unseen rabbit.

I was thinking about that because sometimes I think the world thinks we should be committed because we’re talking to something that is unseen. We talk to God. We think we have a God to talk to and anyone who doesn’t think that’s realistic might think we need to be committed. Now it’s obvious since I’m up here, I believe God is there. But how do we know what’s real? How do we know God is there? How do we know anything?

One way we know things is we are taught. We learn it from other people. And many of us have learned many things a lot from other people. I certainly spent my time in school. Any yet, in the present of information explosion, what I’ve learned is I’ll never know it all. I may have thought at one time, when I was about 10, when I could know it all. But I don’t think so any more. I know that there is a lot I will never know. And so I see the limits to my knowledge - what I’ll learn from others.

The other way we learn, that is think, we see reality is identified with the saying “seeing is believing.” And so it’s what we see that we believe is real. But before I became a pastor, I spent a lot of times with microscopes. And found out that there are a lot of things that are real that I found looking through microscopes that I would have never found, never noticed, couldn’t have seen, without that little help. I guess if I were an astronomer I could go the other way, instead of going small I could go big. But what that helps me see is my perceptions are limited as well.

And then what happens when my perceptions take me places I didn’t expect? Hearing beautiful music can transport me into another place that real. It’s wonderful; is it real? So as I recognize my own limitations, my own inability to know it all, to even see what is here fully. What I also recognize is that God is so big, so encompassing, without a little a help, I’m not going to know God either.

We hear about the *testifying* that God does. What is that? I think its God’s self-revelation to us. God recognizes that we’re limited. We’d never know God fully or even as well as God would like without a little help. And so what do we have? We have The Word. We have the history of God’s relationship with God’s people. And then God comes incarnate, comes in Christ to let us know more fully who he is. It’s God’s own testifying to himself, revelation of who he is, because I know on my own I’m not going to know. God helps us out, comes to us. So if God comes to us, to help us see who he is, what do we have to do to recognize it?

One thing I think we have to do is trust that God’s doing that. In fact, God urges us to trust in what we hear, to trust what he gives us, to trust how he shows us to live. And if

trust is the present, hope is for the future - that he's not going away, that he'll work with us, that he'll walk with us. And then as we begin to trust in Christ and hope for what God has for us, it encourages us to live that great reality that he really has created us to live in, the relationship that is described by love.

So if God testifies to himself, reveals himself, what happens then for us? What are we to do? That's why 1 John says "believe in Christ, trust in him, have faith in him." Then we begin to experience what God is about. And then there's that different phrase in there that says "anyone who has Christ has life." What does it mean to *have Christ*? It is like have a CD that I can put in and listen to? Or maybe it's like having a cold. Or maybe a more positive image - because a cold does become part of us in a way - maybe a more positive image is to think about having a job (hopefully that's a positive image), having friends, having a family. To have Christ then is to have him as part of who we are. God encourages us to have Christ in our lives. Anyone who has Christ in their life has life as the promise and Jesus shows us another piece to that and says "Joy will be entering in." or "My joy will be made complete in them."

So as we allow the reality of God to be there for us, as we begin to accept it, allow God to be part of who we are, to have Christ in our lives, keep encouraged then, to allow that relationship to build. In fact, Jesus goes on at the end of his prayer to talk about being *sanctified*. There's a word we use daily! The idea of sanctified - to be made holy - or to be consecrated, part of that is God's work, isn't it? God's the one who encourages us, who comes to us, reveals himself to us. But there's a part of that, that's ours. Now, I don't really think I can make myself holy. To be made holy is God changing who I am, but God does invite me to be a part of that, and what's my part of that? It's to be committed. That idea of *consecrated to*, Jesus is saying, "I am fully committed to what God is doing". And his commitment is going to help all of us out a lot. Then he calls us to be in committed relationship with God.

It's kind of interesting to be talking about a committed relationship and look around and think how many relationships, how many places in the world today are we willing, or expected to be committed? It seems that commitment itself has been viewed at askance, like it's something that is not useful for us. On this weekend when we celebrate those who have committed their lives to keeping us free, I'm sure glad for commitment. When we think about the way people have committed to doing things in our lives to help us out, I'm thankful for commitment. And I hear Jesus urging us to be sanctified- that is being committed to the relationship we have with God in Christ -- to live in a committed relationship.

God says "Here I am" - testifies to himself, reveals himself through the Word, through Christ, through the community, through worship together and encourages us to recognize as we accept God's presence, is we have Christ in our lives, that we're called to that committed relationship and that in that, we might know joy. We might find life and we might live love. God reaches out his hand to us.

I think about the young man who might kneel down and reach out his hand to the young woman and say "Will you marry me?" -- that committed relationship. These verses kind of say that to us - will you be committed. Amen.