

This morning we are going to begin a series in 1 John, from the New Testament. It will take a while to get through this book, but we have nothing but time until Jesus comes, and if things keep progressing as they are in the Middle East, we might not finish!

In every journey that we ever take, there is a starting point. Michael Card wrote a song about the Joy in the Journey: He writes, "There is a joy in the journey; there's a light we can love on the way; there is a wonder and wildness to life and freedom for those who obey." For the believer in Jesus Christ this is an understatement! Following Jesus is an adventure to beat all adventures! But each one who is a true believer in Jesus had a point in their lives, which they can vividly remember, a point where it all began.

Since the Bible is not only our starting point, but also our reference point, we start there in understanding our journey, a journey designed to be joyful. Moses wrote, by God's prompting, "In the beginning God..." The Apostle John wrote, by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, "In the beginning was the Word..." and now we read, "That which was from the beginning..." What John is saying is this, when it all started, with Jesus at the center of it all, he and the other disciples were there. From the first day, when Jesus started His earthly ministry, we were there. John and His brother James were the second pair of disciples chosen by Jesus—on His first day of choosing disciples. So, he was there at the beginning of this journey. (Matthew 4:21)

I love it because we are able to have an eyewitness account of what really happened. For believers, this helps us to build on what we already know. John says, "We were there." He is not building alone, but includes others in the vision of what Jesus left each of us to do, as individuals and corporately. They were there, hearing, seeing, touching the very life of Jesus, which they are now proclaiming to us.

Look at this, they were "taking it all in"—what does that mean? When someone takes it all in, they are able to see what is going on all around them. They not only listen to and watch what the Teacher is saying and doing, but they also observe the reaction of others, both positively and negatively. In Sherlock Holmes books, by Sir Conan Doyle, Watson, Sherlock's sidekick, often asks his mentor how he knew what was going on, because he did not see it coming. Sherlock answers, "My dear Watson, you see, but you don't observe." John and his companions were always observing, or "taking it all in."

Taking it all in means seeing, hearing, touching, and touching means being involved in a hands-on way. Not just letting things happen, with others leading, but each believer being involved in a real living and sharing of their faith, because we too have been with Jesus. Keep this in mind; these disciples were involved in the life of Jesus.

They followed Jesus, asked questions, made mistakes, answered wrong, occasionally right, and they watched Jesus do the miraculous. They even spoke with Him after His resurrection, look at John 20: 26-31. They were still taking it all in, but somehow the journey begins to include us. Verses 29-31 say, "Blessed are those who have not seen [Jesus] and yet have believed." Verse 31 says, "These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

These disciples are the same ones that Jesus spoke to and said, "Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and hear what you hear, but did not hear it." (Matthew 13:16-17)

This was a lesson that they learned well because when Peter and John were before the Sanhedrin, being told not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus, they replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:18-20)

These people were now very bold in their faith because they have seen Jesus, they have heard Him speak, and they have touched Him, or "beheld" Him. That means that they have had a total experience with Jesus that continues. We have the same thing. We can see Jesus, The writer to the Hebrews states three times that "we see Jesus!" We can Hear from Jesus, through His Word, through teaching about Him, and through a careful, discerning of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Once they knew Jesus they were able to testify of Him, and once we know Jesus, personally, we too proclaim the Word of Life. Jesus is our life, if you're trying to live without Him; your life is the pits! If you're trying to live with Him part time, your life will be even worse than that! Our lives, according to verse 3, are a reflection of His life lived out in us.

His life began in the disciples, who proclaimed it to others, so that they could be in fellowship, or in harmony with other believers, including us. As we are "one" with other believers as we are with Christ, and the Father, through the Holy Spirit lived out in our lives, then we have joy.

This is written, and lived out not just to have joy but to have the joy of knowing Jesus, bring us complete joy. There's nothing worse than finding yourself perpetually almost happy. I imagine standing at the airport, waiting for a loved one to walk through the gate, but they never come, that's being almost happy.

If you are a believer, if you are a person who has accepted Christ as your personal Savior but are not living for Him, then you are experiencing what it is to be almost happy. Give it up; let Him make your joy complete, by living as the writers of the Bible have told us to live. We live with no holds, and no regrets, and we love it. Let's pray.