

September 16, 2012 - Jesus and Nicodemus

We are continuing our series that we started last week and this week, our person that we're going to look at is 'The Searcher'. As we said last week we have these silhouettes on the wall.

Some of you who hurried in here this morning might have thought that Mike forgot to put up the second silhouette, actually the second silhouette is at the back there and I decided, instead of being very lineary and just putting them across the front, every week I'll put up a new one but I'll put them up just randomly around the room, so that when you come in next week, you'll have to say "Now, which one of these is new?" And so, this weeks is at the back of the auditorium, which I thought was a good idea, except that, after I put it up I came in several times and turned on the light and freaked myself out because I saw someone standing there. I have to get used to that a little bit.

So, this morning we're going to talk about 'the searcher' so I figured if that's what we're going to talk about we need to start by talking about searching. I don't know how you feel about searching, if you've done a lot of searching or a little bit of searching. I was trying to give us a sense of what it would be like to be searching for something. I decided well, what if I told you that this morning before anyone was here, I came into the auditorium and I taped a \$20.00 bill to the bottom of one of the shares. Now, that would probably prompt some searching. Some of you are trying to be discreet and kind of feel down underneath and see if you are the lucky person. That's kind of what searching does to us, right? It kind of gives us that feeling. It's a little bit exciting and it's a little bit nervous and we're trying to see if we can search and find that thing which is lost or that is hidden or is undiscovered, and we're trying to locate it. Well, some searching is actually more mental than it is physical. I don't know if you've ever come across one of these things and I don't know if it's going to work up on this screen but there is these pictures and if you stare at them long enough and kind of cross-eyed enough that another picture kind of just jumps out of the screen. When I look at one of these things I feel like I'm searching and I'm focusing and I'm trying to get that picture to come out and jump out of the picture for me.

Maybe another example of what searching would be like for you is, if you came to a fork in the road one day and you were told that you could go one way or the other way and if you took the one way it would lead to utopia and if you took the other way it's going to lead to distopia, which is the opposite of utopia. And if you take one road it will take you to your dream world you take the other one and it's going to be a nightmare. You take one and it takes you to paradise and you take the other and it leads you to disaster. If I told you one goes this way and one goes that way, but there is a clue somewhere in this picture that will tell you which way leads to which destination, then I imagine, before you went much further, you would do some searching for that clue. You would do some searching for the thing that's going to tell you which way is going to take you to the destination that you're looking for. If you understand that kind of searching, then you're in a good place to understand our

text for this morning.

Now, if you look in your Bible at the start of the New Testament, there's four books that we call the Gospels. These are four books, written by four different men and they essentially tell the same story, they essentially tell the story of the life of Jesus. Each one of them tells it a little bit differently. They include some different stories. They have different emphasis and they put things in a different order, they add their own commentary to things. They each kind of have their own theme that runs through it. We've talked about this before a little bit, so I'll see if you recall any of this, if it seems vaguely familiar, but the Gospel of Mark has kind of a pace to it, an urgency, and Mark's key word is: Does anyone remember? Last time no one remembered so I'm seeing if we're any better off here. Anyone remember what the key word in his Gospel is? Immediately! Mark keeps saying immediately, immediately they went out and did this and after they did this. Immediately something else happened. So that's what the Gospel of Mark is all about it has this kind of pace and urgency to it.

Last January, January to April, we went through the Gospel of Matthew and we called the series "Go". Because Matthew's Gospel has this underlying sense of motion and movement and mission. Matthew is a story on the go. It's a story about mission. He uses words like: go, going, and went. 149 times in 28 Chapters, which my math says is 5 times a chapter, somebody is going somewhere. So Matthew has this sense of motion to it. And because it is the story on the 'go', the reader comes expecting to be taken somewhere to be pushed, to be moved, to be nudged along, ending up somewhere different than where he started.

Well, last week, we started our series here in the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John, his underlying theme is the word "believe" or "belief". For John, belief is not just kind of a head knowledge, this mental assent, this assimilation of facts, but for John when he says the word "believe", what he's talking about is a conviction that compels corresponding action. So if you believe, what you believe is going to definitively effect what you are going to do from that point on. This theme kind of runs through John's entire Gospel. He starts out with it in John, Chapter 1, Verses 6-7, talking about John the Baptist, he says:

"There was a man who was sent from God, his name was John, he came to witness and testify concerning the light, so that through him all men might believe."

And it goes all the way through to the end. In John, Chapter 20, 30-31, John writes this, he says:

"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples which are not recorded in this Book, but these 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."

Now, John uses that word, believe, or believed, or belief, and one of those kind of variations,

75 times in his Gospel. It shows up in 18 out of the 21 Chapters in the Book. The most famous verse, including that word is the one that Dave already pointed out to us earlier this morning, John 3:16, right?

“God so loved the World that He sent His only Son that whosoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life.”

So that’s kind of the undertone of John’s Gospel. Keep that in the back of your mind as we go through these lessons each week and look for that word jumping out as John kind of weaves these stories together.

The other thing that’s important to know about John’s Gospel is that, he actually wrote his Gospel a lot later than the other three guys did. A lot further down the road. Scholars estimate these things and say that Mark probably wrote somewhere at 48-55 A.D. Luke probably wrote 57-62 A.D., somewhere in there. Matthew probably wrote somewhere around 65-70 A.D., and John, they put his book somewhere around 90-98 A.D. And that’s significant, not only because that’s later, which it is, but it’s also significant because the 90’s is a time after the siege of Jerusalem. After the destruction of the Temple. It’s a time where Christianity is starting to gain some notoriety around the Empire. And that means more persecution is coming from the Romans, towards the Christians. And that is why, the Jews at this point in time say “You know what? We need to start distinguishing ourselves from the Christians because we don’t want to inherit all of the persecution the Romans are throwing at the Christians. We want to make sure that gets directed to them and not to us by proxy. And so, the Jews were kind of going through this phase of purifying their ranks, which meant if you were a Jewish Christian, you were about to be forced to choose. Are you going to be a Jew or are you going to be a Christian? Because the Jews were saying you have to be one or the other. So that kind of sets the stage for the Gospel of John as we dive in here.

So keep all of that stuff wrapped up in your head as we get into our lesson for today. That background kind of explains for us, why John might start off and lead off with the story of the wedding feast and Cana. This is the story we looked at last week. This is the story where Jesus takes 120 gallons of water and turns it into wine. As we were reading that story last week, John points out to us in his commentary of the story that these are no ordinary punch bowls that Jesus uses. In John 2:6, he writes:

“Standing nearby were 6 stone water jars used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold 20-30 gallons. You see, these jars were used for hand washing. They were used for something that today we might call ‘gray water’. They weren’t for drinking water. There’s no Avian or Aquafina or anything, involved here. The guests arriving at the wedding, and there would be numerous of them, they would arrive at the wedding and use this water to wash their hands and if need be, to wash their feet before entering the wedding banquet. So that’s what these jars were used for. So that’s why he makes known that they were stone jars

because clay jars are more porous so whatever falls off your hands when you're washing gets into the water and then gets into the pot and then the next guy who comes along the water is not so clean. So let's use some stone jars so we can clean them up a little better.

But for whatever reason, Jesus comes along and he replaces this water with miraculous wine. And it's not just any wine either. The Master of Ceremonies at the wedding says "This is the best wine. Better than anything else that has been consumed thus far." And you can consider that story kind of John's warning shot across the bow. This tone-setter for the entire Gospel. The new wine is served and the old wine is tossed out like dishwater. You see, Jesus has come to replace the old and the difference between the old and the new is an enormous one.

You've probably heard this expression a lot of times in a lot of places. "New and Improved." But not everything that says it's new and improved is actually new and improved. All you have to do is go to a movie that's a remake of an old movie, or an old T.V. show and you'll realize that new is not always necessarily new and improved. If you go back and watch the old show it's probably not as good as you remember either, but that's beside the point. Or maybe you've had the experience where you've upgraded the software on your computer to a newer version. Maybe something that has the word "Vista" in it, or something like that and you get this new software on your computer and instead of being new and improved and wonderful, it's got lots of bugs in it and it doesn't work and it slows everything down and it's just a nightmare because new is not always improved.

Does anyone remember what happened on April 23, 1985. It was a revolutionary day in the world of "Soda". April 23, 1985, Coke decided that they were going to open the vault and change the formula for Coca Cola in the first time and forever. And so they brought out new Coke on April 23, 1985. Less than two months later on July 10, 1985, they were forced to bring out old Coke or Coke Classic, as they spun it at that time. Because everyone tried the new Coke and decided that New Coke is not new and improved, it's new and worse. We want the old Coke back. And it wasn't long before new Coke totally faded out of the picture and all there was in your grocery or convenience store was Coke Classic. Well finally, in 2007, they decided let's just take the word Classic off the thing, because new Coke doesn't exist. It's not a factor anymore. Coke is just Coke now. You see, not always is new and improved. Sometimes new isn't much better. Sometimes new is indistinguishable from old. Sometimes new is not even as good as the old.

But, according to John, what Jesus offers is not merely new, or not merely new and improved, but it is new and blow the old right out of the water. Now, I think Jesus and his disciples might have been remembering the wedding feast at Cana when he tells this parable later on in his ministry. In Matthew 9: 16-17, he says|:

"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from

the garment making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wine skins. If they do, the wineskins will burst and the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins and both are preserved.”

That’s what Jesus is talking about. He says “I’m bringing this new wine and this new wine is going to explode all the old wineskins. There’s going to be nothing left because this new wine is so dynamic and it’s so exciting and it’s so potent.” And so, John writes because he wants to give people the choice between holding on to their old faith or embracing their new faith, in Christ. He writes because he wants to give people the assurance that what Jesus offers is dramatically better than all the other options. You see, if we were talking about money, the old is a penny and the new is a million bucks. If we were talking about earth tremors, the old doesn’t register and the new is off the Richter scale. If we were talking about density, the new is granite, and the old is a marshmallow. If we were talking about spices, the old is cilantro, and the new is, just about anything else, because anything else is better than cilantro, in my personal opinion. Maybe I’ll give you a different foot analogy than that, because there are some who like cilantro so that may not work. This week I was down in Regina for a meeting with some other ministers and we were spoiled because the person who was hosting the meeting said, instead of the usual like greasy pizza, or subs, that we usually have at these meetings, he was going to do something special and so he brought in a barbeque. At lunch time when we went out for lunch he brought out this barbeque and he brought out some steaks and some shrimp and so we sat there just outside the church building with the barbeque going and I tell you the truth, it smelled good before he put anything on it and it got better from there. We were sitting there cooking this stuff and just standing around and wafting it in a little bit, but it wafted into the foyer and down the hallway to the offices where one of the people working in the office came out and said “this is not fair, I’m sitting in here eating a rice cake and you guys are down there with the steak and shrimp and making the smell come all the way down to me.” Well, this is what John’s talking about: the new is the steak and shrimp and the old is the rice cake.

Now, John carries this theme through the first chapters of his Gospel, at least, if not through the whole thing. He starts by recounting the story of Jesus turning water into wine, which, as I’ve said, we looked into last week. But he doesn’t stop there because later in Chapter 2, he talks about Jesus going into the Temple and clearing everyone out of the Temple. While he is there the people get upset with him for clearing the money changers out of the Temple and Jesus says “Destroy this Temple and I will rebuild it in three days.” And again, challenging that they held the Temple as a place of worship and Jesus says “We can destroy the old and I’m going to rebuild the new in three days when I rise from the grave, because the new is going to be so much better than the old.”

In Chapter 4 in a couple weeks from now we’re going to see Jesus with the woman at the well and she’s at the well, at this place that’s a holy place at the well of Jacob, that Jacob actually dug hundreds and hundreds of year’s ago and she said “This is a special place.” And Jesus

asks her for water and she says “Can you give me better water than Jacob dug up himself, essentially.” And Jesus says “forget that, I can give you living water.” And then they get into a further discussion about worship and she said “The Jews say, worship in Jerusalem and we say worship on Mount Garrison” and Jesus says “That’s the old way of doing it. The new way is that people are going to worship in spirit and in truth.”

In John, Chapter 5, we’ll meet a man who is lame and he’s sitting beside this pool and it’s a strange pool which for some reason, every now and then it would start to bubble up. The theory was that, when it would start to bubble up, the first person into the pool would be healed from whatever it was that was ailing them. So this guy was there wanting to get into the pool but he said that someone always beats me and gets in there first. Jesus comes along and says “bubbling pools are the old way. I’ve got something much, much, better for you. Take up your mat get up and walk.”

And he goes on from there, Jesus talks to the Jews about the manna that Moses gave to them in the wilderness and Jesus says “Forget that. That’s the old. I’m the living bread that comes down from Heaven.” Later on in Chapter 8, he’ll be at the festival where there’s this GIANT candelabra in front of the Temple that’s supposed to represent the pillar of fire that led the Jews through the wilderness and he stands in front of it and says “That’s the old way, I am the light of the world. Whoever comes to me will never walk in darkness.” And so, you see this pattern through all of this where John is trying to set up this idea that, that is the old and Jesus is the new and the new completely blows away what the old has to offer.

And it’s right in the middle of all of that, that in walks the searcher. Starts in John, Chapter 3:1-2:

“Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus. A member of the Jewish Ruling Council. He came to Jesus at night and said “Rabi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God for no one could perform the miraculous signs that you are doing if God were not with him.”

Now, Nicodemus comes at night, and there’s lots of speculation as to why that might be but John uses this story and puts this story here because in the Gospel of John and even in his letters, he likes to create this dichotomy, these two sides of things going against each other. As you read John’s Gospel and his letters, you’ll see constantly, over and over, this discussion about light and darkness. He starts out his Gospel saying “The light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not understood it” talking about Jesus there. Later on, in this actual passage, Jesus will say “This is the verdict, the light’s come into the World but the men love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.” In John’s letter, he will say “this is the message we’ve heard and declare to you. God is light and in Him, there is no darkness at all.” And so, Nicodemus comes to Jesus in the night when it is dark. And so, there’s speculation as to why that might be. Lots of people speculate that he came in the middle of

the night so that no one would see him coming to Jesus because he was a Pharisee and Jesus often had a lot of run-ins with the Pharisees. Maybe he came at night just because he was simply too busy during the daytime. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, he was a teacher and Rabi, so maybe he was just too busy. Or, maybe he wanted to come at night because Jesus was surrounded by mobs of people all day long and he wanted to have a private conversation with him. But whatever reason brings him to Jesus at night, the symbolism of someone searching for truth in the dark is a powerful one.

Have you ever tried to search for something in the dark? Maybe you're at home and the power goes off and you're kind of fumbling around to find the flashlight or the candles or whatever so you can see. Maybe you're out camping far out of town where there's no street lights and it's a cloudy night so there's no moonlight, it's the middle of the night and you're trying to find the zipper on the tent and it's dark and you can't find where you're going.

Oh! I hesitate to tell this story....but when I was young, probably 8 years old or so, my family was visiting friends of our family and we were at their house and there was myself and my older brother and the son of that family. At night time we decided to all sleep downstairs. That would be fun. So that's what we did. We got some air mattresses and sleeping bags and slept downstairs that night. What I didn't realize was, there's no windows in their basement and after we all went to sleep they closed the door at the top of the stairs and turned all the lights off, so when I woke up in the middle of the night with a need to go to the washroom quite urgently, it was pitch black. I was still half asleep so for some reason, I thought I was still in my bed in my house so I got out and I went to where the door should be in my room and there was nothing there. So I scrambled around to find something else familiar and I couldn't find anything. I stumbled around in the dark for, I don't know, it seemed like a really long time, until I couldn't wait any longer and....there I was. It is hard to be in the dark searching for something. It is not easy to be searching in the dark, but that's what Nicodemus was trying to do.

So, as John sets up this story, he tells us more than just the time of day it occurs at. I've never noticed this before and I've read this story, I don't know how many times, I've preached it several times, I'm sure, but I've always missed this point because I always start at verse 1. Now you think Verse 1 is a natural place to start, but it's not. As we've said on many occasions, when John and the other Bible writers wrote their Books and their Letters, they didn't divide it into chapters and verses like we have now. That happened much later. So, when John originally wrote it, Chapter 2 flowed right into Chapter 3, so when I always started at Chapter 3:1, I was missing some of the flow coming into this story. So let's just back up a few verses into Chapter 2 and see if you can pick out what John is leading us into as we begin this story: John, Chapter 2 :23 to 3:2:

“Now while Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them,

for he knew all men. He did not heed man's testimony about man for he knew what was in a man. Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish Ruling Council. He came to Jesus at night and said "Rabi, we know you're a teacher who has come from God for no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing, if God were not with him."

Now, that connection and those parallels tell me two things about this story. First of all it tells me that John is using Nicodemus as a microcosm of what was going on with a lot of people as they thought about Jesus at this time. A lot of people who saw the signs he did and were trying to figure out who he really was. John is using Nicodemus as kind of a case study of how that was going.

The other thing it tells me is that Jesus knew exactly where Nicodemus was coming from when he showed up on his doorstep in the middle of the night. Which might be why Jesus just totally skips all the small talk and dives right into the deep end. Nicodemus has essentially just politely just said "Hello" and Jesus replies with "I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom, unless he is born again." "How can a man be born again when he is old?" Nicodemus asks. "Surely he can't enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus answered "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of the water and of the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit. You should not be surprised at me saying, You must be born again." Now, Jesus gives two descriptions in this passage of the same radical transformation that he says must occur if you want to enter the Kingdom. The second one is to be born of water and the Spirit. And this is commonly kind of agreed on by scholars that this is a reference to baptism. Think back to Jesus' own baptism when John baptises him in the River Jordan and the Spirit descended on him like a dove. Think ahead to Peter at Pentecost after he preaches his sermon to the people. The people reply and say "What must we do?" And Peter replied in Acts 38: "You must repent of your sins, turn to God and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ to show that you have received the forgiveness of sins and then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." So, throughout the New Testament, baptism and the Spirit are often tied together and so, people think that this reference of 'born of the water and the Spirit' is a reference to baptism.

But the first reference that Jesus uses, the first phrase he uses is 'born again' and that phrase actually has two possible meanings. It could mean born again, or reborn, like it is often translated, but the word used as often translated, could also mean 'to be born from above'. And so, as we look at this passage, we wonder which of these two is it? And while most scholars talk about this and they say, well Jesus was speaking Aramaic, and so he wouldn't have used this exact word, it would have been John who selected this dual meaning word. And we're guessing that John picked the dual meaning word because John liked the dual meaning of the word. John thought that fit very well with what Jesus was talking about.



My dad was up here earlier, talking about Friend Speak and he mentioned the Friend Speak barbeque that was held a couple of week's ago and he showed pictures of some of the group activities. One of the group activities that he gave us was, he gave us some common English idioms and we were supposed to take those phrases which make sense to anyone who knows them but to someone who doesn't know English, make no sense whatsoever. We were supposed to work through those. One of those that got a particularly good response in our group was "A few fries short of a Happy Meal." Maybe you've heard that expression or one's like it. A few bricks short of a load. A few chips short of a cookie. The elevator doesn't go all the way to the top. Someone is not playing with a full deck.

Whatever idiom you like to use, that's exactly what Nicodemus was thinking about Jesus in this moment. When Jesus said "You must be born again." Nicodemus was thinking "you are a few fries short my friend." And not because the phrase itself was so foreign to him, but because the concept it represented was just simply too unthinkable. You see, when a Gentile converted to Judaism, he would not only be circumcised, he would be given a whole new Jewish identity. It's even said that the transformation was so drastic that when a Gentile went through this process, he could actually marry someone who was formerly an immediate relative because the people viewed him as having become this whole different person during this process. Does anyone want to take a guess as to what the Rabies called that transformation? They called it 'Being born again'. And so this is a phrase that Nicodemus would have been well aware of. Of course the idea that a Jew, especially a Pharisee, Rabi, member of the Sanhedrin Jew like Nicodemus, would be in any kind of need of such a process, was so ludicrous to him, that it made physically re-entering the womb, a more reasonable explanation to Nicodemus. You see Jesus' message is, no matter who you are, you need to be born again.

I like Jessie, Jessie's a good kid but no matter what, if it weren't for this morning and for Jessie giving his life to Jesus as he did, he could never have become the new person he is now, on his own. You see, no matter who you are you don't need some tweeking, you don't need a little fixing up, you don't need a couple replacement parts, what you need is to be born again, to be re-created; to be rebuilt right from the ground up and that's exactly what I need, as well. No matter who you are, what you really need is to be born from above. Dave referenced this earlier, he said "flesh gives birth to flesh but the spirit gives birth to Spirit." In other words, the radical kind of change you're needing comes from God alone. There is no human endeavour on earth that will ever achieve it. And what Jesus is saying to Nicodemus, is that this change, this rebirth, comes not from earthly things like following the law, or things like being a physical descendant of Abraham, but this kind of change comes only by the spirit of God entering into your life.

Earlier in John's Gospel he says: "To all who receive Jesus, those who believed on His name, he gave the right to become children of God. Children not born of natural descent nor

of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.”

Now all of this is a wonderfully evangelistic message. It's only a paragraph away from John 3:16, the verse about God loving the World and sending His son to redeem it. And the message is, no matter who you are, God is offering you a new life and a new you. No matter what you've done, God is offering you a fresh start and a new beginning. No matter what your past or your baggage or your hang-ups, God is offering you rebirth from above.

If you are here this morning and you are searching for meaning or truth or purpose, God's response to you is: “Be born again, be born from above. Be born of water and Spirit and you can become the person you were always meant to be from the very beginning.”

Here's what is often easily overlooked, at least on my part. When Jesus is talking to Nicodemus here in the middle of the night, he wasn't speaking to an outsider. He wasn't talking to the modern equivalent of an un-churched person. He wasn't evangelising someone who would be considered to be among the 'lost'. Jesus was speaking to an insider. He was speaking to a religiously devout man. He was speaking to someone who he identifies as 'Israel's teacher'. Which means there's a message in this passage for all of us, this morning, as well.

At that meeting I was in, in Regina this week, one of the people there shared a story of a man who was in their worship assembly that previous Sunday. He said he talked to him afterwards and this man kind of shared his story a little bit and said he had grown up in the church and in a Christian home but as he grew older he kind of walked away from that and left that and turned his back on that. He had gone through some very rough times. He said that morning he was walking around the area where their building was and he actually came to a different church first and he walked inside there and stood there for a few minutes and decided this was not where he needed to be and so he walked out of that and walked down the road and came into the church of my friend. He sat down and he worshipped with them and he listened to the message and he came up and talked to the minister after the service and explained the journey he had been on. You see, there are people all around us who are searching. There are searching people in your office and at your school. There are people who are searching in your neighbourhood and maybe even in your family. And some of those people are searching in complete darkness, but they're still searching. They may not know what they're searching for but they're still searching. Our job is to share the Good News both in words and in actions in a way that's going to direct these people towards the light so they can find what they're searching for, so they can find what they need. You see, there's a message in this passage beyond simply sharing the story with others. There is a reminder here for us that our confidence and our hope is not in the physical world. It's not in who we are or who we know. It's not in what we have or what we've done. It's not even in our donations or doctrines, or our piety or our routines, or our prayers or our rituals, even though some of those things are very valuable and important, that is not where our confidence

and our hope lies. There is a challenge here for us, to continue to be searchers. To continue to deepen our relationship with God. To continue to allow the Spirit to transform our lives. There is a challenge in here for each of us to wake up every morning and to go to bed every night with the words of Peter on our heart. Peter writes in 1Peter 1: 3-9:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. Kept for us, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this we greatly rejoice though now for a little while, we may have to suffer grief and trials of all kinds. These have come so that our faith worth greater than gold, never perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though we have not seen him, we love him. Even though we do not see him now, we believe in him and we are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy for we are receiving the goal of our lives, the salvation of our souls.”