

Given the fact that we intend to baptize Hannah Waters later in the service—I thought it prudent to preach a free sermon entitled—Love to the unseen Christ—from the words of 1Peter 1:8—"whom having not seen you love..."

Before I come to the text—let me briefly answer two questions—[1] WHO was the letter to—from vv1-2 we learn two things about those to whom this letter was originally written—[a] they were—"pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia"—they were strangers scattered throughout 5 provinces within Asia Minor, [b] they were—"elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ..."

[2] WHY was the letter written—one of the major themes of the letter is enduring trials—why does God bring trials upon His people and how are they to respond in the midst of them, vv6-7—"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ..."

Thus our text—v8a, is originally written to pilgrims (strangers), scattered throughout this world, chosen and kept by God, enduring great trials for their own good, who, though they have never physically seen Christ, they loved Him, and were filled with great joy at the prospect of seeing Him when He returns—which brings me to my text and the single truth I intend to open up this morning—In the midst of this world, Christians love an unseen Christ...

I. The Text Explained

II. The Text Applied

I. The Text Explained

A. They never saw Christ

1. 1Pet.1:8—"whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him"—that is—with the physical eyes...
2. Now—this of course was in contrast to Peter Himself, 2Pet.1:16—"we were eyewitnesses of His majesty..."
3. Peter, along with the other disciples, were eye witnesses of Christ's majesty—they saw Him and heard Him...
4. This is not so with the second generation of Christians—for most of them never physically saw or heard Christ...
5. Jn.20:29—"Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed..."
6. In the first century there were basically two kinds of Christians—there were those like Thomas who saw, heard, and touched Christ...
7. But then there were others, like the Christians Peter was writing to, who never saw, heard, or touched Christ...
8. Our Savior describes such people as blessed—"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed..."
9. Now—the question becomes—in what way are those blessed who believe, and yet never saw, heard, or touched Christ...
10. Well—I suggest what our Savior means is this—those who believe without seeing, evidence a stronger faith...
11. Those who believe God and trust Christ without seeing Him—are simply taking Him at His bare and naked word...

12. We could say—it takes greater faith to trust Christ without seeing Him—and thus this brings more glory to God...
13. And—because it brings more glory to God, Christ here pronounces such people as specially and uniquely blessed...
14. Thus—I think I am warranted in saying—since the first generation of Christians—no one has ever seen Christ...
15. In fact the NT expressly says, that the last person on earth to have physically seen Christ, was the apostle Paul...
16. 1Cor.15:3-8—"Christ died for our sins...He was buried, He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures...He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that he was seen by over five hundred brethren...After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time..."

B. They sincerely loved Christ

1. 1Peter 1:8—"whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory..."
2. Now—before I go further let me clarify—while they never saw Christ physical they did see Him spiritually...
3. V8—"Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice"—they saw Him with the eyes of the soul...
4. And, seeing Him with the eyes of the soul, believing on Him, they love Him—literally—"you are loving Him..."
5. Thus—Christians love Christ because the eyes of their soul have been opened to who He is and what He's done...
6. 1Pet.2:7—"Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious"—that is—faith makes Christ appear precious to us...
7. Thomas Vincent—"The loveliness of Christ appears not to the eye of sense, but to the eye of faith. They who do not see Him with this eye cannot love Him; and they who see him with this eye cannot choose but to love Him. Such as do not love Christ, it is not because Christ lacks beauty, but because they are blind. Now all true Christians have this eye of faith to discern Christ's excellencies, and none but true Christians have this eye..."
8. But—what exactly does it mean to love Christ—or perhaps put another way—what does loving Christ entail...
9. Well—I suggest loving Christ entails three things—thoughts of Christ, desires for Christ, and submission to Christ...
10. [1] Thoughts of Christ—when someone loves another person—it's typical that they think often of that person...
11. Those who love Christ will have lofty and accurate thoughts of Christ—they love to think on His person and work...
12. By nature we are blind to who Christ is—native man sees nothing lovely in Christ and thus thinks little of Him...
13. Ps.10:4—"The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek *God*; God (Christ) *is* in none of his thoughts..."
14. This obviously changes when a man is regenerated—for he now loves Christ, and thus, he now thinks of Christ...
15. For example—when I first began to court my wife—she gave me a picture of herself, that I kept in my Bible...
16. And all throughout the day I would think of her—and on occasion I would take the picture out and gaze at it...
17. Why—because I was beginning to have affections for her—and thus—I would have regular thoughts about her...
18. Brethren—it was impossible for me to get her out of my head—I thought about her throughout the entire day...

19. So too—those who love Christ have accurate thoughts about Christ—they see in Him a moral beauty or perfection...
20. But—you might ask—has Christ provides us with a picture (portrait) that we might excite these thoughts of Him...
21. Yes—the Holy Scriptures, and especially the four gospels—for it's in these that we behold our beloved Savior...
22. Robert Leighton—"We have the report of the perfections of Jesus Christ in the Gospel; yea, so clear a description of him, that it gives a picture of him, and that, together with the sacraments, is the only lawful, and the only lively picture of our Savior. Now faith believes this report, and beholds this picture, and so lets in the love of Christ to the soul..."
23. Matt.22:37—"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind..."
24. What does it mean to love God with all our mind—it surely means we fill them with accurate thoughts of Him...
25. [2] Desires for Christ—that is—the hearts of those who love Christ—go out after Him—they long to be with Him...
26. Thus—their thoughts are not only taken up with Him, but their affections are as well—He has their mind and heart...
27. Love longs to be with the object loved—for example, when you love someone you long to be with that person...
28. Song 3:1—"By night on my bed I sought the one I love" 5:4—"My beloved put his hand by the latch of the door, and my heart yearned for him..."
29. Again—think back when me and my wife were courting—I was never content with merely looking at her picture, I wanted to talk to her and spend time with her..
30. So it is for the soul in love with Christ—it seeks after the one it loves—it yearns for communion with Christ...
31. Thomas Vincent—"The actings of Christians' love to Christ is in their desires after union unto, and communion with Christ. It is the nature of love to desire union to the object beloved, especially of this love to Christ; and, this union being attained, the desires are after communion with Christ, converse and fellowship with Him..."
32. [3] Submission to Christ—that is—those who love Christ—not only think of Him, have desires for Him, but they obey Him...
33. This is also true of human love—the husband who loves his wife, is to sacrificially give himself to his wife...
34. So too—those who love Christ, give Him not only their minds and hearts, but they also give Him their wills...
35. Jn.14:23—"If a man love Me, he will keep My words"—He will submit himself to every word of Christ in Scripture...
36. Thomas Vincent—"Lovers give themselves unto those whom they love. This accompanies the marriage union; and such as love Christ are espoused and joined unto Christ, and they give themselves unto Christ to be His and wholly at His disposal, as the wife gives herself unto the disposal of her husband..."

II. The Text Applied

A. By way of instruction

1. Here—I want to spend a little time speaking about the nature of faith—as making spiritual things clear and near...
2. [1] Faith makes invisible things CLEAR—throughout Scripture faith is likened to the eyes of the soul or heart...
3. By nature—we are blind to spiritual realities and truth—by grace, our eyes are opened and we see spiritual realities...
4. In fact there's a sense in which we can say—when our eyes are opened, we then see things as they actually are...

5. We then see this world as it actually is—we see it's temporary, sinful, and unable to satisfy the needs of our soul...
6. Thus—while Christ is lovely—we don't love Him by nature—because we don't believe—we are spiritually blind...
7. We see that, while we may have people who really love us—no one can love us in the way that our souls need...
8. But—when our eyes are opened—we see things as they are—we see Christ as fully suited to meet our needs...
9. 2Cor.4:3-4—"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them..."
10. 2Cor.4:6—"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ..."
11. [a] By nature—to be blinded and unbelieving is one and the same thing—it's to have the gospel veiled to us...
12. [b] By grace—to have our eyes opened is the same thing as believing—it's to see the glory of God in the face of Christ...
13. Heb.11:24-27—"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible (2Cor.5:7)..."
14. [a] WHAT he did—"he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt..."
15. [b] WHY he did it—"for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible..."
16. [2] Faith brings invisible things NEAR—that is—faith not only enables us to see but also feel truth within us...
17. Faith doesn't merely enable us to see things clear—but it allows spiritual things to have a present reality in the soul...
18. Heb.11:1—"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"—this is more of a description of what faith does than a definition of what faith is...
19. [a] Faith is the evidence of things not seen—that is—it brings evidence of spiritual truth to the mind or soul...
20. [b] Faith is the substance of things hoped for—that is—it provides a real substance of spiritual things in the soul...
21. Perhaps we could say—faith not only enables us to see things clearly—but it brings Christ near to the soul...
22. Thus—Peter identifies three things as "precious" within these first two chapters—faith (1:7), blood (1:19), and Christ (2:7)...
23. This word "precious" literally means—"of a high value"—faith is precious because it gives us a precious Savior...

B. By way of motivation

1. Here—I want to spend a little time providing a couple of motives for Christians to increase their love to Christ...
2. For while it's true every Christian loves Christ—it's also true that no Christian loves Christ the way they should...
3. Because Christ is physically in heaven and not on earth—our faith often grows weak and our sight grows dim...
4. Thus—I want to suggest three simple ways wherein—Christians can increasingly love a Christ that's unseen...

5. [1] Remember WHO He is—that is—one way to awaken and strengthen our love for Christ is to look at His Person...
6. My friends, surely one very powerful way to stir up love within our hearts for Christ, is to ponder His lovely Person...
7. Ps.45:2—"You are fairer than the sons of men"—that is—His beauty exceeds that of every other man—the sons of men...
8. Now—obviously this doesn't refer to our Savior's physical beauty but His moral beauty—beauty that lasts...
9. Song 5:10-16—"My beloved is white and ruddy, chief among ten thousand. His head is like the finest gold...His eyes are like doves...His cheeks are like a bed of spices...His hands are rods of gold...His legs are pillars of marble...His mouth is most sweet, Yes, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem..."
10. This description is in response to the questions in v9—"What is your beloved more than another beloved..."
11. In other words—what is so wonderful about your Beloved—that you would charge us to search after Him (v8)...
12. The Bride first describes her beloved in general terms (v10), descends to particulars (vv11-16), and then with another summer statement (v16)...
13. V10—"My beloved is white and ruddy, chief among ten thousand"—He is white (divine) and ruddy (human)...
14. He is "chief among ten thousand" because He's the God-Man—He's fairer than the sons of men"—He's the GodMan...
15. V16—"His mouth is most sweet, yes, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem..."
16. My friends—no thing nor person within this world can rightly and fully be described as altogether lovely—but Christ...
17. Thomas Vincent—"There is no person or thing in the world that is most lovely which can properly be called '*altogether lovely*.' Many defects may be found in the most friendly persons, and much insufficiency may be found in the most desirable things, but Christ is altogether lovely; unlovely in no respect, there being no spot or blemish, nor defect or imperfection, to be found in Him..."
18. Simply put—everybody in some sense or respect is unlovely—except for Christ—He alone is altogether lovely...
19. Thomas Vincent—"If any creatures have wisdom, it is but a beam; Christ is the sun. If they have goodness, it is but a drop; in Christ is the ocean. If they have holiness, it is but a spark or dark shadow; Christ is the brightness of His Father's glory. If they have the Spirit, they have it but in some measure, the Spirit is given to Christ without measure..."
20. [2] Remember WHAT He's done—that is—remember what Christ has done in delivering us from our sins...
21. Lk.7:47—"Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little..."
22. The fact that she loved much, as evidenced in her washing His feet with her tears, proves that she was forgiven much...
23. She obviously wasn't forgiven because she loved much—but she loved much because she was forgiven much...
24. Lk.22:19—"This is My body which is given for you...This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. Do this in remembrance of Me..."
25. He commands us to remember WHAT He did for us—because He knew that we would be prone to forget it...
26. [3] Remember WHY He's done it—that is—not only think upon WHAT He has done, but also WHY He did it...
27. Why did the eternally begotten Son of God, come to earth, become a man, bear our sins, and satisfy God's wrath...
28. Without doubt, one of the best ways to increase our love for Christ, is to think deeply upon His love for us...

29. Why did He do all that He did for us—was it because we deserved it—NO—it was only because He loved us...
30. Thomas Vincent—"True Christians love Christ because of His love, His love which He bears to them. He loves them with a first love and with a free love. He loves them with a tender and compassionate love, with an active or doing love, with a passive or suffering love. His love is infinite, without bounds of limits; it is unmatched, without comparison; transcendent, beyond comprehension; everlasting, without change; and will have no end or conclusion..."

C. By way of consolation

1. There are three great graces, love, faith, and hope—all of which are represented within v8—faith and love are obvious
2. Hope also is no less present—for the joy mentioned at the end of the verse—is the result of hope found in v9...
3. V9—"receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls"—that is—as you anticipate receiving it...
4. V5—"who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice..."
5. That is—you presently rejoice in hope of a future salvation—that will entail your present faith being turned to sight...
6. Christians presently see Christ BY FAITH—and to the degree they see Him—they rejoice with joy inexpressible...
7. But brethren—this is NOT the whole of our hope—for our hope is that we shall see Him physically—face to face...
8. Ps.16:11—"In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore"
1Cor.13:12—"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face..."
9. Christian—though you don't presently see Him bodily and physically—you will—one day faith turns to sight...
10. And the little bit of joy you now know—will turn to—"inexpressible joy full of glory"—that is—the joy associated with glory...
11. Robert Murray McCheyne—"When I stand before the throne, dressed in beauty not my own, when I see thee as thou art, love thee with un-sinning heart, then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then, how much I owe..."
12. In closing—let me make an important clarification—no sinner was ever saved because He loved Jesus Christ...
13. We are NOT saved because we love Christ—but we love Christ because we believe on Christ—believe and you will love...
14. The gospel is NOT love Christ—the bad news is that you do not love Christ—though this is what the law demands...
15. The gospel is the good news that Christ loves sinners—and if you believe on Him—you will love Him too...