



LOOKING TO THE THINGS UNSEEN

Grace Communion International

Minister: Eric Vautour

Date: JUNE 10, 2018

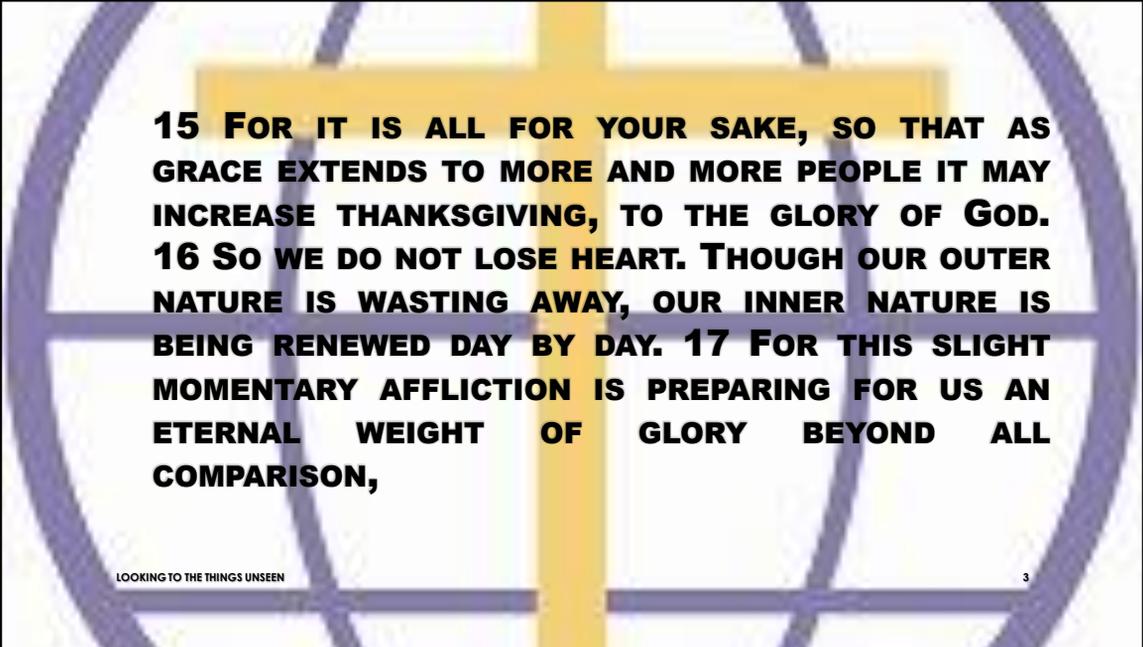
3ND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



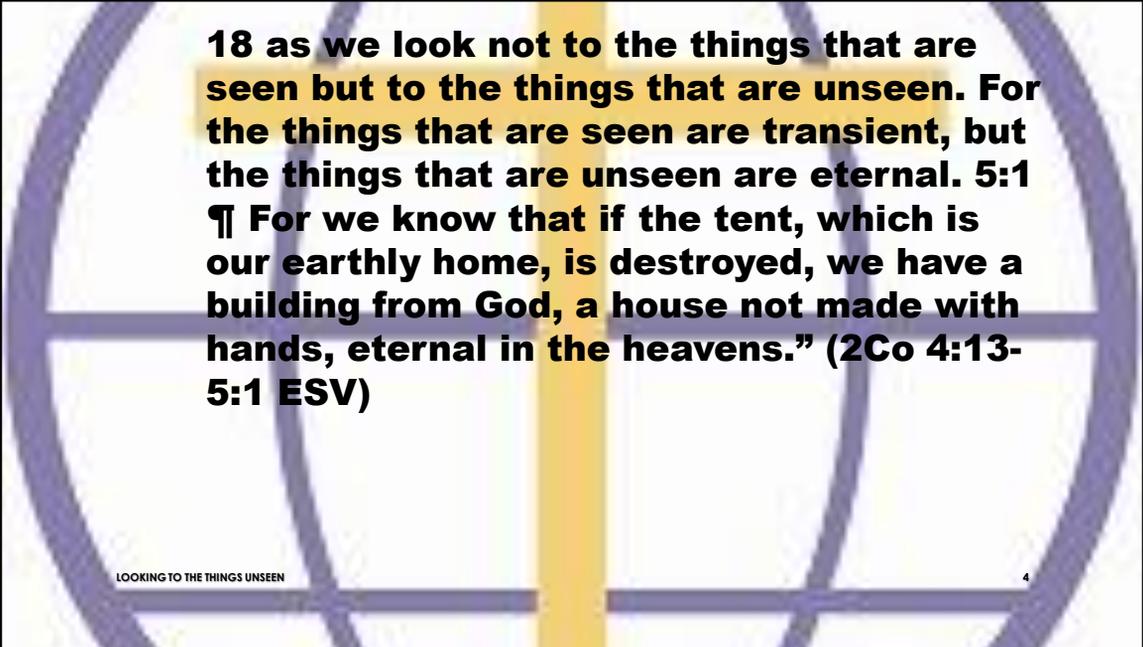
**SCRIPTURE
READING:**

**2 COR 4:13-
5:1**

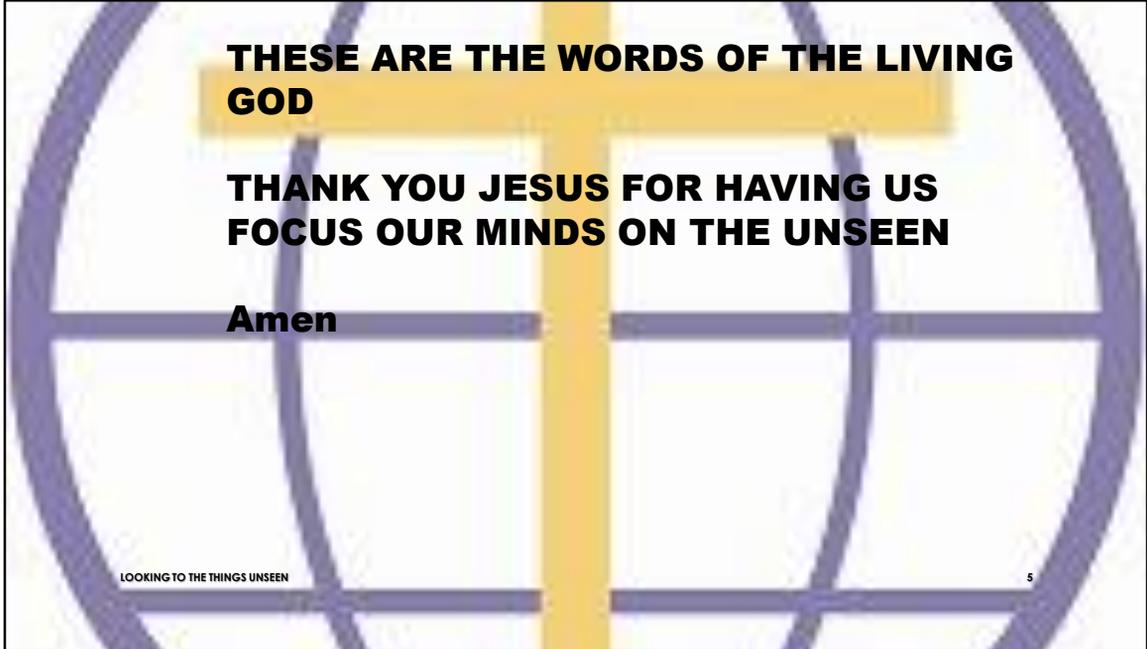
**“13 SINCE WE HAVE THE SAME SPIRIT
OF FAITH ACCORDING TO WHAT HAS
BEEN WRITTEN, “I BELIEVED, AND SO I
SPOKE,” WE ALSO BELIEVE, AND SO WE
ALSO SPEAK, 14 KNOWING THAT HE
WHO RAISED THE LORD JESUS WILL
RAISE US ALSO WITH JESUS AND BRING
US WITH YOU INTO HIS PRESENCE.**



15 FOR IT IS ALL FOR YOUR SAKE, SO THAT AS GRACE EXTENDS TO MORE AND MORE PEOPLE IT MAY INCREASE THANKSGIVING, TO THE GLORY OF GOD. 16 SO WE DO NOT LOSE HEART. THOUGH OUR OUTER NATURE IS WASTING AWAY, OUR INNER NATURE IS BEING RENEWED DAY BY DAY. 17 FOR THIS SLIGHT MOMENTARY AFFLICTION IS PREPARING FOR US AN ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY BEYOND ALL COMPARISON,



18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. 5:1 ¶ For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2Co 4:13-5:1 ESV)



As Michael Morrison rightly says in his article, EVIDENCE OF THE RESURRECTION, "Christians, Jews, and atheists agree that Jesus was crucified and buried. The crucial belief for Christianity is that he was also resurrected — as evidence that he is the Son of God, the teacher of truth, the door and the way of salvation, the firstfruits of the resurrection. There is good evidence for his resurrection".

(<https://www.gci.org/disc/11-evidence>)

Unbelieving historians acknowledge that Jesus lived and was crucified. They simply do not acknowledge who he was and who he is. They do not acknowledge his resurrection, that he is alive now.

As Christians, we believe in the written Word of God. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God because it says so in Scripture. We believe that Jesus is alive! Resurrected!

The truth of who Jesus is was given to us through Jesus by the Holy Spirit as he empowered the apostles to transmit to us in his word.

7.4 What does it mean that the Holy Scriptures are “inspired”? (from “WE BELIEVE”)

It means that the Bible is “God-breathed.” The Holy Scriptures were given by the Holy Spirit through prophets and apostles and were preserved by the Spirit as the revelation of God and his acts in human history. They are not simply a collection of human opinion. Jesus gave his apostles authority to speak and teach for him, and a unique gifting from the Spirit to do so (Luke 9:2; Mark 3:14; Mark 16:20; Luke 22:35; Acts 16:10; Rom 1:1; 2Tim 3:16; 2Cor 10:8; 13:10; 1Thess 4:2)

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As we take a look at what the Bible tells us in today’s Scripture reading, it is important to realize that we are not reading just any book or any word. We are reading the words inspired by God himself, by Jesus through the Holy Spirit. These words are infallible.

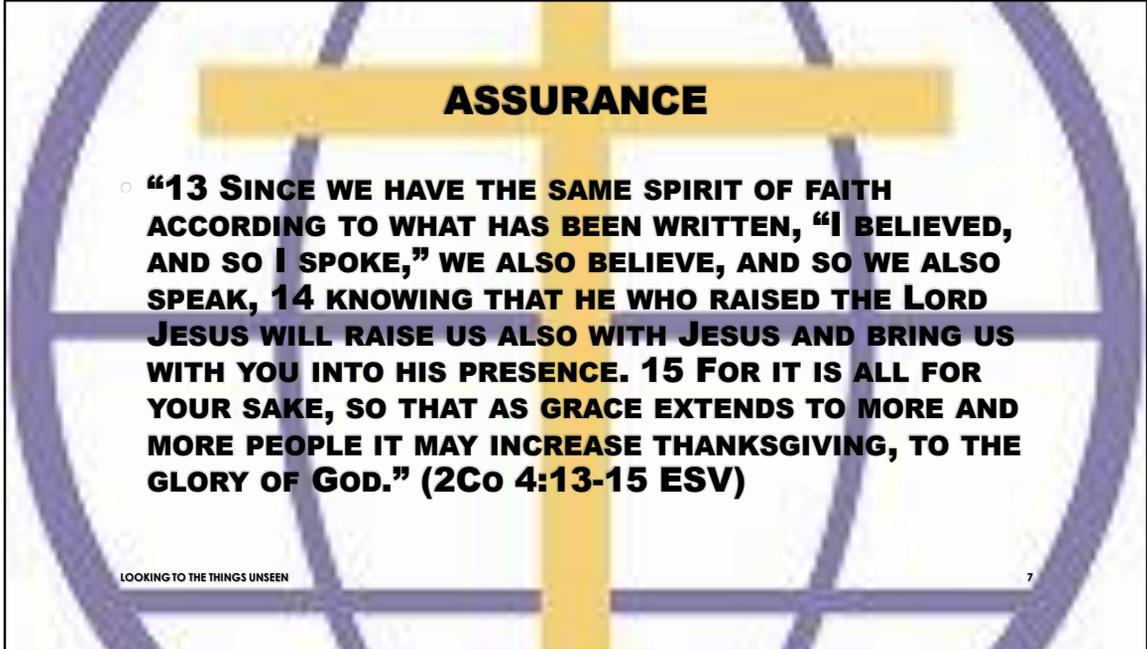
By God’s grace, the Holy Scriptures are sanctified to serve as God’s inspired Word and faithful witness to Jesus Christ and the gospel. They are the fully reliable record of God’s revelation to humanity, culminating in his self-revelation in the incarnate Son. The Bible is therefore foundational to the Church and is viewed as infallible in all matters of faith and practice. (idem)

For Christians, the Bible is therefore a very important book. We need this book to be able to know Jesus. Jesus reveals himself within his church, his called out ones. He stands in the midst of his church and churches. He is the Head. The Bible is a means for us to seek God and to know his will for our lives. The Bible therefore ought to be part of our diet just as food is to our physical survival.

It is impossible for us to know God and how he is working in our present world to accomplish his revealed purposes without his revealed word.

There are all kinds of information outside of the Bible which are very helpful. We are to be aware of what the Bible says to recognize what is helpful and what is unhelpful in these resources. We are to be grounded in the word of God as it always takes precedence and primacy. The Word is Jesus and his word, the Bible, has to be the anchor and the foundation of our faith.

We are to trust in the appointed writers in the New Testament meaning the apostles, James the brother of Jesus, Luke who accompanied Paul during most of his ministry and who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. The single most prolific author in the New Testament is the apostle Paul. We are also to trust what he says because he is appointed as an apostle. He has received the authority of Jesus Christ. We are to trust what he says about the future of believers and how we ought to live now as new creations, as children of God. What he says about baptism and communion is important. Outside sources do not take precedence over what he was inspired to write, whatever people may say.



The assurance of the apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian believers is that they would be resurrected to be in the presence of God with the apostles.

How can our imagination to be excited about being in the presence of God in Jesus Christ?

The book of Revelation certainly stirs up the imagination vividly!

Jesus revealed himself to the apostle John in glory first at the Transfiguration and secondly when the apostle John wrote the last book of the Bible, the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. This last book of the Bible is a letter written to specific people. It is also a prophecy and the document is an apocalypse which simply means unveiling or disclosure.

We read in the book of Revelation that Jesus loves us, in the present. He has freed us of our sin by his own blood. He has made us a kingdom, and priests to his God and Father. To him belongs glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The human words the apostle John employed to describe what he saw are very

inspiring.

Reminiscent of Daniel seven, he saw one like the Son of man clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. Jesus wears the high priests robe and the King's robe. Aaron, the high priests in the Old Testament, pointed to Jesus. He wore a priestly robe.

As Darryl W Johnson says in his book, **Discipleship on the Edge**, the Latin word for priest is Pontifex which is an engineering term meaning bridgebuilder. John is being reminded that Jesus is the greatest bridge builder of all. He knows both sides of the canyon because he is fully human and fully God.

He had a golden sash around his chest. In Jewish customs, when a belt was worn around the waist, it meant that the person was preparing for work. When the belt was worn across the chest it symbolized or communicated that the person was resting in the accomplishment of a task. John is being reminded by Jesus through the Holy Spirit that the work of the high priest Jesus Christ is done. There is no need for any further sacrifices. Jesus is both the sacrifice—the Lamb of God—and the perfect priest who offers this perfect sacrifice.

The long robe was also a robe that the kings wore. Jesus is not only the high priest having done what he has come to do on earth. He is now King. He rules everything. He is King above all kings!

Then we read that his hairs on his head were white, like white wool, like snow. Jesus is ageless. He has seen all the kingdoms of this world come and go. Any kingdom not build on him cannot stand because it is built on sand and not on solid rock. Man always tries to be independent from God and tries to do things his own way. Jesus is King. In due time, he will establish a kingdom that will endure forever. It has begun now in his church And Jesus is ruling invisibly on the earth and in our world to bring about the fullness of the Father's kingdom. There are things unseen with the naked eye.

The whiteness of his hair also an indication of his purity, cleanness and holiness. Jesus is also perfectly wise. He knows everything. When the apostle John saw him, he was not standing far from the churches but he was standing in the midst of the churches. He rules everything and he is also intimately involved in everything.

We then read in verse 14 of Revelation 1 **that his eyes were like a flame of fire.** Imagine the picture the book of Revelation is describing. Having eyes like a flame of fire!

What does fire do? Fire illuminates and fire penetrates. Fire also burns all impurities. Jesus knows everything about us. The good news is that he is not here to burn us alive. Jesus is love and justice. He detest sin and what it does to us. He is well aware of exactly who we are, some of the things we may hide from others and even ourselves. As we trust Jesus, he purifies us of all these impurities through the Holy Spirit as the Father is transforming us into the image of the perfect humanity of his Son, the man Jesus. We hide nothing from Jesus. He knows our innermost thoughts and feelings. He is gradually cleaning up our bents to be selfish and unloving to make us exactly as he is and all the time retaining our identity.

In Revelation 1 and verse 15, **we read that his feet were like burnished bronze refined in a furnace.**

In Daniel 2, Daniel was given the insight to interpret a dream King Nebuchadnezzar had. What Nebuchadnezzar saw was a picture of kingdoms who would come and go. He saw one whose toes and feet were partly iron and partly clay—a kingdom that would be partly strong and partly brittle. These feet are not like the feet of Jesus the apostle John saw. As Darryl Johnson says, the feet of Jesus are strong, firm, steady, already tested and strengthened by fire. Consistent with Nebuchadnezzar's dream he saw what would never be destroyed—the kingdom of God who would put an end to all the kingdoms of men and bring them to an end. The kingdom of God will stand forever.

Who John saw in the glorified Jesus is majestic.

How he describes Jesus in his glory does not stop here. **He says that his voice was like the roar of many waters.** For those of you who have been to Niagara Falls or to other falls, the sound of water rushing down those falls drowns out other noises but yet is peaceful. Last year or the year before, I brought our true grandson to Fundy National Park. They went swimming in a pool at the foot of a waterfall. The sound of the water was so peaceful, so pleasant. Just like a waterfall, the sound of Jesus voice brings peace and tranquility. He shuts off and drowns out other distracting noises.

Then in verse 16, John said that he saw the glorified **Jesus having in his right hand the seven stars.** The book of Revelation tells us that the seven stars are the seven angels of the seven churches addressed. It is also interesting that in ancient time, people thought that the planets had control over life. Astrology was popular back then as it is still now today. The Roman emperors surrounded their thrones with stars and planets. What John saw was not Jesus being surrounded by planets and stars. He saw Jesus having the seven stars in his right hand, meaning that he is in control and has rule over everything. This is the consistent message of God's word.

He also saw coming from his mouth a sharp two-edged sword. Jesus certainly interacts very closely with each of us individually and collectively. The sharp two-edged sword coming from his mouth is not one that does battle in the “warring” sense of the word. The author of the book of Hebrew describes this sword in the following manner, **“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Heb 4:12 ESV).** The word of God is good. In fact, we are told to feed on, to live by it in Matthew 4. **Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.**

And finally, in his description of Jesus, the apostle John says, **‘and his face was like the sun shining in full strength’.** The only words that came to John’s mind in describing the glorious Jesus was the bright shining of the sun which brings light and warmth to the earth. His face shone directly on John.

In Psalm 67, they prayed for God’s face to shine on them. This is how the prayer went (next slide).

o **“1 ¶ «TO THE CHOIRMASTER: WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM. A SONG.» *MAY GOD BE GRACIOUS TO US AND BLESS US AND MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON US, SELAH.* 2 THAT YOUR WAY MAY BE KNOWN ON EARTH, YOUR SAVING POWER AMONG ALL NATIONS. 3 LET THE PEOPLES PRAISE YOU, O GOD; LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE YOU! 4 LET THE NATIONS BE GLAD AND SING FOR JOY, FOR YOU JUDGE THE PEOPLES WITH EQUITY AND GUIDE THE NATIONS UPON EARTH. \@SELAH\@ 5 LET THE PEOPLES PRAISE YOU, O GOD; LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE YOU! 6 THE EARTH HAS YIELDED ITS INCREASE; GOD, OUR GOD, SHALL BLESS US. 7 GOD SHALL BLESS US; LET ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH FEAR HIM!” (Ps 67:1-7 ESV)**

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When the apostle John saw Jesus in his glory, he was so awed that he fell at his feet as though dead. Jesus, in his glory, warmly reassured him that he was not to fear. Jesus is the living one, the first and the last. He died and now he is life forevermore. He has the keys of death and Hades. He let himself be subject to death and yet sin and death could not hold him down. Jesus has the key to eternity.

When Paul said those Christians would be brought with them into God's presence, this is an awesome statement.

How else can we be but thankful. As his grace extends to more and more people, other people will also be thankful to our great God, to his glory.

Knowing the great future that lies before us, we are not to lose heart. God is doing a marvellous work. Even if the outer man is wasting away, God tells us that our inner self is being renewed day by day.

Consequently, the problems that we face in this life are preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

This is why we are to keep our eyes not on the things that are seen but on the things that are unseen. What we see will pass away but what we don't see in the realm of God's kingdom will never pass away.

Our body is compared to a temporary tent which is our earthly home.. Even if it's destroyed, we already have a building from God in Jesus Christ, which is not made by human hands.

This is the assurance we have in Jesus Christ by the love of God the Father and the Holy Spirit. As the disciples of Jesus Christ, as believers, we have a future that is beyond what we can imagine. The reality will experience from the time of the resurrection to eternity is absolutely marvellous. It will pale to insignificance the presence troubles we may be having now in this life. **"21 When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." (Ac 14:21-22 ESV)**

Only God in Christ can give us and assure us of this awesome future.

Let us persevere. Let us keep on keeping on in Jesus through the empowering of the Holy Spirit who is the guarantor of our future inheritance! Amen.

Let us pray.