

A Great Confessor - Jesus' witness from his own to the world

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[0 : 00] Now, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.

So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb.

He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded up in a place by itself.

[1 : 05] Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Then the disciples went back to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept, she stooped to look into the tomb.

And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, Woman, why are you weeping?

She said to them, they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him. Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.

[2 : 22] Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned and said to him in Aramaic, Rabbani, which means teacher. Jesus said to her, Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.

But go to my brothers and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, I have seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, Peace be with you. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.

[3 : 41] If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld. Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him, We have seen the Lord. But he said to them, Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you.

Then he said to Thomas, Put your finger here, and see my hands, and put out your hand, and place it in my side.

Do not disbelieve, but believe. Thomas answered him, My Lord and my God. Jesus said to him, You have believed, because you have seen me.

[5 : 03] Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed. Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book.

But these are written, so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name.

Do keep those words open in front of you. I want to talk about them this evening. I want to talk about the unique currency that you must invest in to secure the future that you really long for. A currency that you can trust as the key to life. I'm not talking about Bitcoin, by the way. But listen to how the Harvard financial historian, Neil Ferguson, describes money.

He says money is a matter of belief, even faith. Belief in the person paying us. Belief in the person issuing the money.

[6 : 12] Money is, he says, trust inscribed. Trust inscribed. He tells us that the earliest forms of money were clay tablets with a written promise on them to hand over grain at harvest time.

It's what today I suppose we would call a futures contract. And you would accept that tablet in payment for, well, let's say, a sheep today if you trusted your counterparty to be good for that grain at harvest time.

And you wouldn't accept it, I guess, if you didn't trust them to be good on delivery. And it's no different today, really. The currency markets, the bond markets, are what really tell you what is going on with government finances because currency traders and bond traders, they're not fools. They're pretty hard-headed. They allocate capital to make gains and to prevent losses. And so they will examine the evidence in a very hard-headed way. They're very skeptical of a government's financial promises.

They won't just believe what a government says. They will examine their actual actions. They'll pass judgment on whether they really feel they can place their faith, place their trust in that government's currency and its bonds.

[7 : 33] And they'll base that not upon a government's financial promises, but upon its proven fiscal prudence. That's why when there's a crisis in the world, there's always a flight of capital to U.S. dollars, not to Zimbabwe dollars, because they trust that the U.S. dollar will be worth something in a month's time, whereas a Zimbabwe dollar might be worth a cent in a month's time.

And some of you will remember the hyperinflation there. I've got in the house somewhere a billion-dollar note. But unfortunately, it's a Zimbabwe dollar, not a U.S. dollar. Mind you, even the very hardest of currencies do lose value over time.

If you had a U.S. dollar 100 years ago today, it would actually only be worth a cent today. But it's lasted a bit longer than the Zimbabwe one. But you see, a currency's value is all a matter of faith. It's a matter of trust, and it's based on hard evidence. It's based on reality. It's based on something that careful people, sane people, intelligent people, can weigh up and act upon.

And that does tell you, actually, why today more and more nation's central banks and big investors are turning to gold, not to paper currencies, even hard currencies, because they don't trust governments, even the U.S. government, and all the vast debt that they've been accumulating.

[8 : 53] It's all a matter of trust. And it's the same, isn't it, on a personal level. I'm sure that you will hope that whoever is managing your pension fund is investing it based on something that is credible, not credulous.

Because if it isn't, then your retirement is at risk. You don't want your fund manager, do you, to just be taking a leap in the dark. You want their decisions to be based on signed evidence, on observable reality.

You want them to exert signed judgment, credibility. You want to be able to trust where your money's going. Well, how much more important to know what currency investment you can trust when the stakes are not just comfort and prosperity in retirement, but when the stakes are for all eternity.

When what's at stake is nothing less than heaven or hell. You see, the question that Easter poses for every single human being is whether you trust the currency of the Christian gospel.

Because it is the trust inscribed in that message that will prove to be the only currency with any lasting value in the great crisis that is certain to come.

[10 : 16] And that crisis is the judgment of Almighty God. Christian faith, you see, as Joe said in his testimony, is not a leap into the dark.

It's not the spiritual equivalent of the Zimbabwe dollar. It's quite the reverse. It is what solid gold is, in fact, to every paper currency. It's trust in something that is solid, that is tangible, that is real, that is lasting, that can never be devalued, that can never be rendered absolutely worthless.

Because behind it stands not, well, not the Federal Reserve or the Bank of England or the European Bank or anything else, but Almighty God himself. So I want to talk this evening about this currency of Christianity, the message of the risen Jesus, and the trust that is inscribed in these words of witness to those who, from the very beginning, claim to testify to the clear and credible reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

There's just no place at all for leaps in the dark based on emotions, based on hunches. Not at all. What we want to do as a Christian church is to urge people to examine the evidence with all their faculties.

But equally, of course, there's surely also no place for a closed-mindedness, an intransigence, a refusal to consider even being open to persuasion by compelling truth, if it can be demonstrated.

[11:48] You see, if the currency of Christianity is in fact the only store of value for eternity, what a calamity, what a calamity it would be if you had been given the chance to buy in, to invest freely, but you'd refuse to do so because you just never really bothered to take the evidence seriously when it was put in front of you.

Imagine that is actually how people who some years ago were offered 100 Bitcoin for a dollar and who scoffed and refused it, I bet you they will feel pretty sick today when that's worth something like \$6 million.

But how much more, how much more if you had been offered something of infinite value, freely, and yet you'd scoffed and you'd closed your mind and your unbelief had prevented you receiving something, even investigating something, that would utterly transform your life, not just now, but forever and ever.

That is what nearly happened to the great skeptic Thomas that we read about there at the end of this passage in John 20. That's what would have happened to him had it not been for the extraordinary patience and generosity of God.

But Thomas' story is preserved for us both as a warning but also as an encouragement because it's here to point us to not make the mistake that he did at first.

[13:17] Look at the first paragraphs there on your sheet in John 20. verses 24 and 25 of that last section because what we see here is a picture of a very common situation and that is of a great cynic.

What you see there in verses 24 and 25 is Thomas the skeptic who rejects the evidence of the risen Jesus. I will never believe, he says. Thomas, one of the twelve, called the two and was not with them when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him, we've seen the Lord. But he said to them, unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his sight, I will never believe.

I will never believe. Now remember what these previous sections that were read to us have told us. This account is full of evidence and it's passed on by reliable witnesses, entirely trustworthy people, known sources to these others.

Look at the very first paragraph in verses 1 to 10. We have the evidence here of the sprinting fishermen, Peter and John, two of Jesus' closest disciples. They ran to the tomb, verse 4 says, and John outran Peter.

[14:37] He must have been training harder. But he didn't go into the tomb, but Peter did straight away. And verse 6 says, he saw, he saw the evidence of grave clothes still in place, untouched.

And yet the body, gone from inside them. And then, verse 8, we're told the other disciple, John goes in and he saw and he believed. And notice verse 9, it's very interesting.

Why did they believe? Not because they understood the scriptures and were expecting Jesus to rise from the dead. We're told they didn't yet grasp that. They didn't understand. Why did they believe?

They believed the evidence in front of their own eyes. Showing them something they never expected, did not expect at all, were utterly surprised by, but could not deny.

And then in verses 11 to 18, we have the same evidence from sorrowful Mary. Mary's weeping. Why is she weeping? Because she's not looking for a living Jesus.

[15 : 36] She's looking for a dead Jesus, a dead body. But then, she hears his real voice. And she sees him with her eyes.

And she clings on to her so much that Jesus has to try and peel her off. And verse 18, look at her evidence. I have seen the Lord. And she's heard his voice and passes it on.

And then verse 19, we have more evidence still. The testimony of all these scared disciples.

They're all together. All of them hear his voice. All of them see his feet, his hands, his wounded side.

They feel the breath of his mouth. And so when Thomas appears later, they say to him, verse 25, you see, we have all seen the Lord. We've seen him. And Thomas says, do you think I came up the climb of a banana boat?

Are you kidding me? Don't be ridiculous. Dead people don't come back to life. We all know that.

See, skepticism did not begin with people like Richard Dawkins and so on.

[16 : 45] If you listen to people like him, you would think, well, all these people in the past were complete fools. They were simpletons. They would believe anything at all. That's absolute nonsense. The whole point of this description is to point out, as all the Gospels point out, that the resurrection was very hard to believe and they didn't believe it at first because that sort of thing does not happen.

And they only believed it on the basis of utterly convincing evidence, irrefutable evidence. But at this point, you see, Thomas was having absolutely none of it.

Unless I see, I will never believe. And I think we can understand that, I guess, probably most of us would have been exactly the same.

But just think for a minute. Think for a minute if we applied that attitude to every aspect of life. Think what it would mean for life.

It would mean that we were never trusting of anything that's vouched for by another person ever, however trustworthy, unless we saw it for ourself. We wouldn't take anything at all on trust.

[17 : 58] Well, that would stop our world going round, wouldn't it? Couldn't have money for a start, could we? Because money is trust inscribed. Using money is trusting somebody's word that we can't see.

So all trade, all commerce, all human interaction would have to ground to a halt if we said, I'll never believe. Actually, that's what does happen, isn't it, in a credit crunch as we saw some years ago.

When governments, when banks no longer believe the word of other banks about what assets they really have and so on, well, they won't lend to one another. They'll do a Thomas.

They'll say, well, unless I see your capital, I'm not going to lend any to you. And when that happened, the whole world system broke down, didn't it? Trust broke down because the word credit comes from the word *crederi*, which means I trust.

And in the credit crunch, nobody could trust anybody else in the financial world. Well, of course, there was good reason for that, wasn't there? Because their words weren't true and their assets were toxic and it was pretty disastrous.

[19 : 02] But that's just one example, isn't it, about how the whole of life actually depends on being able to believe the words and the witness of other people when they give a reasonable explanation of facts and when they're credible and they're reliable as witnesses.

That's how we decide the truth about almost everything. Think about a court of law. So there's a murder trial and the case hangs on the testimony of the witnesses.

And imagine hearing five first-hand witnesses giving testimony and they say, yes, your honor, I saw that man killing that man.

And the next witness, yes, your honor, I saw that man killing that man five times. And the judge directs the jury towards a guilty verdict. But the jury man stands up and says, no, we've discussed this, my lord.

And unless all of us saw it with our own eyes, we will never believe that he did it. Well, that would be preposterous, wouldn't it? Our whole justice system would collapse.

[20 : 07] If that's the way we worked. Well, think about trying to buy something over the internet. You go onto Amazon, you need a new computer. So you read all the description, you read the pictures and all the rest of it, you read all the customer reviews.

But then you pick up the phone and you phone up Amazon and you say, well, I want to buy this computer, but I want to see it with my own eyes and touch it with my own hands before I buy it. And

they say, well, it's impossible, you can't do that, it's in the warehouse.

You say, well, I'm not going to buy it then. But then you think about it a bit and you decide to phone a friend who bought one of these computers and you phone him up and he says, yeah, it's great.

And I received it absolutely on time, it's terrific, and so on.

So you say to yourself, okay, I trust my friend John, I'm going to buy this computer. So you go back to Amazon and you order it online and a box doesn't come up, does it, and say, oh, sorry, we need to see your cash in our hand before we're going to send this to you.

In fact, we need to have actually spent that cash on something else to make sure that it really works before we even fulfill your order. No, that's not what happens, is it? You give your credit card, your trust card, and you believe that the retailer will send your order and they believe that the card company will pay the bill for the order and the card company believes that you will pay them at the end of the month.

[21 : 26] The whole transaction is based on trust. Trust in the word and in testimony that is credible, that's believable, not credulous, but credible because, well, in the first place, the card provider is only going to give you a card if they've checked the evidence of your track record and your credit score and all the rest.

That's how life works, isn't it? We trust based on a reasonable credit score, based on a trustworthiness score in all manner of things in life.

Now, here is Thomas receiving first-hand, reliable, utterly consistent evidence from numbers of people who he has known, who he knows he can trust, and who he should have trusted.

And yet he refuses, point blank, to believe. And I just ask the question, is that reasonable? Is that a wise way to live?

I suppose it's possible to live your life like that, never really trusting anyone, never trusting anything. But I think we all recognize, don't we, when somebody is like that, that's a symptom of a disordered life, of a damaged life.

[22 : 43] That's not a sign of a balanced, healthy person. If you live like that, you'll never make friends, will you? Because you don't trust that they might not someday let you down.

you might refuse to marry because you can't trust that one day you won't be betrayed. I never want to have children just in case they grow up and they disappoint you.

And on and on it goes. You see, in the end, if you live like that, you can't trust anyone except yourself. of course, it's good to be honestly skeptical.

It's good to demand to examine evidence. It's good to only want to commit to things that are credible and are true. I think, by and large, we should be a lot more skeptical, especially of what's all around us all the time in the media and the advertising world and the world of politics and so on. But that's quite different. It's quite different to be pathologically foolish, to close your mind, to begin always with the presumption that some things are utterly impossible, cannot possibly be true, no matter who witnesses to you that it is true.

[23 : 53] If you go home tonight, you find in your email box an email that's come from Nigeria that promises you a million pounds from a totally unknown benefactor.

Well, I suggest probably you don't trust that. Put it in your junk box if it's not there already. But supposing tomorrow morning you get a letter from a Glasgow solicitor telling you the news of a legacy from a relative that you do know that's quite different, isn't it?

It'd be rather foolish to throw that in the bin and ignore it. Even if you find yourself saying, I can't believe it. She couldn't stand me and I couldn't stand her. This is extraordinary.

Well, sometimes, sometimes skepticism is roundly rebuffed by the evidence, isn't it? And you'd be wise to take note. And that's what happened to Thomas.

We'll see that in a minute, but let's break for a moment and sing a lovely hymn about the glorious change that did come when up from the grave Jesus Christ arose. old Oh, in the rainy day, Jesus my Savior, Praise Him and come in Him, Jesus my daughter.

[25 : 41] Oh, in the rainy day, Jesus my daughter.

Oh, in the rainy day, Jesus my Savior, Praise Him and come in Him, Jesus my Lord.

Oh, in the rainy day, Jesus my Lord. As a traitor over all the shores, He arose in time for the dark of the wind, And He made His glory and His grace to praise.

He arose, He arose, He arose, Hallelujah, Christ of Rose.

Jesus my Lord. Heaven and come in His grace, Jesus my Savior, He arose, He arose, He arose, Jesus my Lord.

[27 : 37] Amen. Jesus my Lord. Jesus my Lord. Jesus my Lord. Jesus my Lord. He arose, He arose, He arose, I do turn again to John 20.

And have a look at verses 26 and 27. Because there we witness a great confrontation. Thomas the skeptic now rebuked by the evidence of the risen Jesus.

Eight days later his disciples were inside again and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you. And then he said to Thomas, Put your finger here and see my hands.

And put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve. But believe. Exactly a week later, it's the eighth day, inclusively, the following Sunday night.

And still the disciples are meeting behind locked doors. They're afraid. What do you think the expression on Thomas' face was when Jesus said those things to him?

[29 : 13] You probably know if you've ever been in the position where you've wrongly disbelieved somebody. Or maybe you've been completely wrong about somebody.

You've thought really ill of them. And you've been very angry about it. And maybe you've accused them in doing some kind of wrongdoing against you. Or something like that. Maybe you've said all nasty things about that person.

Maybe it's just been in your head. Or maybe it's even been to other people. And then you've discovered that you're completely wrong. And you realize that not only is what you thought wrong, but the truth is the exact opposite.

Instead of wronging you, they've been incredibly kind to you, good to you. You're overcome with a great sense of shame, aren't you? And you realize how irrational perhaps your belief had been to jump to all of those wrong conclusions, to think so wrongly, to think so unworthily, to cast aspirations on somebody in that way.

And I'm sure that's how Thomas felt. Sick. Sick to the pit of his stomach. And perhaps we can empathize with that.

[30 : 27] Jesus appears there in verse 26 and says, Peace. And everybody, no doubt, except for Thomas, leapt for joy. But Thomas just gaped in silence.

And he's rebuked by his own words. Do you see? Of unbelief. They're exposed by Jesus' words. Here's my hands. Here's my side. Here's the things you want, Thomas. Don't disbelieve.

But believe. Notice Jesus doesn't call Thomas a doubter. He's not doubting Thomas. He's a rank unbeliever.

Jesus is rebuking him. Just as he rebuked the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Remember at the end of Luke's gospel. Because they refuse to believe the words of scripture.

Well, he rebukes Thomas here just the same for refusing to believe the words, the evidence of reliable, trustworthy, first-hand witnesses. You should have believed them. It's not healthy doubt that you've got Thomas.

[31 : 32] It's culpable rejection of the truth. It's unbelief. It's wicked. And that's the truth. But Jesus is wonderfully merciful to Thomas.

He does give him sight with his own eyes, touch with his own hands. And he sees that Jesus is risen indeed. And so verse 28 shows us, you see, remarkably, the great confession.

We see Thomas the skeptic now rejoicing in the evidence. Thomas gives an outright confession, not only notice of Jesus' resurrection, but of his deity, my Lord and my God.

And these words actually are the high point of the whole of the gospel of John. The great cynic has become the great confessor. The greatest witness of them all in this gospel.

Just like later on, the great persecutor of the church, Saul of Tarsus, became the great preacher of the church, the greatest missionary of the church, when he saw the risen Lord Jesus and was rebuked by him.

[32 : 43] And many another great skeptic, many another opponent of the gospel, right throughout history, St. Augustine in the 4th century, right through history, to many of us perhaps sitting in this room this very day.

What's the point of John recording all of this for us in this resurrection chapter? Well, look at verses 29 to 31 because that gives us the answer.

Thomas becomes our teacher. He's the one that we're to pay heed to and learn not to scorn real and credible evidence about the truth of Jesus.

You have believed because you have seen me, Jesus says to Thomas. Now, he's not deprecating that. The whole point of this whole chapter is that there was indeed irrefutable evidence.

Evidence that convinced even the most hardened skeptics, like Thomas, about the reality of the resurrection. But notice Jesus also says, Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

[33 : 44] And what Jesus means by that are made absolutely clear in the following two verses. And it sums up John's whole purpose in writing this gospel. Do you see verse 31? All these things, all this testimony is written so that you, that is all of you who hear and read these words, so that you may believe and find life in Jesus' name.

Why is that important? Well, because Jesus was not going to remain bodily on this earth for much longer. I am ascending to my father, he said to Mary in verse 17.

So inevitably, it was going to be impossible, wasn't it, for anyone to believe on the truth about Jesus if they were to take Thomas' approach. Unless I see with my own eyes, I won't believe.

Jesus is saying, that's going to be impossible until the day that I return, when every eye will see me. But then, it will be too late.

And that day is coming. That day is coming for the whole world. Jesus says that earlier on in John's gospel in chapter 5. But on that day, he says, Only those who have believed in him now, through hearing his words and the testimony of his apostles and their gospel, only these will rise on that day to life.

[35 : 01] Those who have refused these words, they will rise only to judgment. Because these words, the words of the apostles, the eyewitnesses, who testify to Jesus, because these words are the legal tender of salvation.

These words are the currency of life. These are the words backed by the promise of the issuer, God Almighty himself. And in the upper room, the night before his death, Jesus prayed for all his own, not just his first followers, but he says, For all who will also believe on me through their words, their testimony.

And he said to the twelve, You will bear witness. And he said, Whoever receives the one I send, receives me.

And of course, likewise, whoever rejects and disbelieves and doesn't trust the word of the one he sends, will reject and disbelieves Jesus himself.

If you short sell a country's currency, and some of the older ones here will remember, George Soros so famously did to the British pound in 1992, if you short sell a country's currency, you're heaping scorn on that nation's government, on its sovereignty, on its strength, on its power, on its competence.

[36 : 36] It's a slap in the face. It's a concrete expression of distrust and disbelief in the power of the issuer. And you see, in just the same way, if you short sell the currency of Christ, the gospel of Christ, the promissory note of the gospel, and you're heaping scorn, you're heaping rejection on the sovereign Lord himself.

You can't have the life of God. You can't have the life that God promises in the gospel, the resurrection life from the dead, beyond the grave, along with Jesus. You can't have that if you reject the gospel of God, the word of trust that God has given.

If you reject his currency of life, you reject him. Because the currency of the gospel, like all currency, just as the professor says, is a matter of belief.

Belief in the person who lies behind the currency. Belief in its guarantor. The Christian gospel is trust inscribed.

It is the genuine first-hand witness and testimony of the apostles who were with Jesus from the very beginning, who saw him, with her own eyes, who touched his risen body.

[38 : 00] Listen to what John the Apostle, who wrote this, listen to what he wrote later in his first letter to the church. He says, that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the word of life.

A life was made manifest and we have seen it and testify to it. And we proclaim to you the eternal life. It was with the Father and which was made manifest to us.

That which we have seen and heard, we proclaim to you. Thomas rejected out of hand at the beginning what later proved him to have been so very wrong.

And Jesus is saying to us and John is saying to us in this gospel, don't be like that. You're blessed if you believe what he heard and what he should have believed and you believe.

Don't say, I will never believe. Amazing. How many people, how many intelligent people do that?

Don't do that, says John.

[39 : 17] Now examine the evidence. Take time to weigh it up. Ask questions. What's there to lose? Come back here next week and hear more.

We're not desperate. We're not going to brainwash you. We're supremely confident in our currency, in the word of life entrusted to us in this gospel of Jesus.

We want you to examine it freely for yourself so that you don't lose out. Come to our life course.

Examine the evidence.

Read the Bible for yourself. Have an open mind. Be open minded enough to say this. Pray to God and say, Lord, if you are real, if you are risen, I'll open my eyes, open my mind so that I, even though, even though up to now I've been a skeptic, so that I too might become not a cynic anymore, but a great confessor of Christ to know you as my Lord and my God.

if you're not a Christian, I dare you to pray that prayer. What have you got to lose? Ultimately, the only way to see what a currency is really worth is to take it into your own hands and try it out and discover what it will bring you.

[40 : 35] Isn't that right? Well, says John here in verse 31, that's what this gospel currency is for.

All of this is written, it's inscribed in trust so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.

And I pray that that might be so for all who hear these words this Easter day so that you also will leave tonight singing my hope is in the Lord who gave himself for me.

Amen.