

*Christ in Us*  
*Part 9 – Flawlessly Faithful*  
John 17:1-12

Laura Anderson ~ June 7, 2026 ~ Faith Presbyterian Church



<sup>1</sup> After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, <sup>2</sup> since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup> I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

<sup>6</sup> “I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; <sup>8</sup> for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup> I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. <sup>10</sup> All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup> And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. <sup>12</sup> While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.” (John 17:1-12)



Back in July of 1962, NASA launched the Mariner 1, an unmanned rocket that was set to do a flyby of Venus. Just minutes after liftoff, communication between the rocket and guidance controls on the ground went awry. The rocket’s controls were interpreting normal

fluctuations in the flight path as major shifts. In trying to correct what didn’t need to be corrected, the rocket’s guidance controls caused the rocket to wobble off course and point downward, raising fears that the rocket would crash into the busy Atlantic shipping lanes. The decision was made to end the mission, and the rocket was destroyed.

Upon review, the problem was traced to a handwritten formula that was then programmed into the computer incorrectly. This is how the equation should have been entered [ $\bar{R}_n$ ], but the top over-bar was left out. Or, as the *New York Times* headline reported it, “For Want of Hyphen, Venus Rocket Is Lost.” Such a small thing — one tiny hyphen out of place — and the whole endeavor was ruined.

As we turn this morning to consider God’s faithfulness, it can feel almost as fraught with tension and risk as launching a rocket with a missing hyphen in its code. Author Jerry Bridges puts it bluntly when he writes of the “absolute necessity of the faithfulness of God.”<sup>1</sup> Without it, our salvation is not secure, our sanctification is not secure, the forgiveness of our sins is not secure, the surety of God’s presence with us in suffering is not secure, our hope in Christ for eternal life ... not secure.

And the stakes are equally high as we look to Jesus and his faithfulness. Orthodox Christianity holds that human sin has separated us from God since the time of the first humans and the Fall. Our being made right with God is something we cannot do on our own, but only through Jesus. It all depends on Jesus! It all depends on him living a blameless, obedient, flawlessly faithful life before the Father. No choosing sin. No choosing disobedience. No choosing a white lie. One pinky toe straying off the Father’s righteous path, and Jesus would have been a sinner, just like you and me. One small sin, and just like that rocket, the whole thing would have ended in disaster, and our salvation through Christ would not be possible.

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<sup>1</sup> Jerry Bridges, *The Fruitful Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 111.

The good news is that Jesus *was* faithful. So as we continue to worship him today, let's consider together for a few moments the beauty of his faithfulness by taking a look at today's passage in John 17.<sup>2</sup> As you may know, in this chapter, Jesus is praying for himself and for his disciples, just hours before his arrest.

### Christ Is Flawlessly Faithful

The first evidence of Jesus' faithfulness comes in the very first verse, where he prays for himself saying, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you." The path of Jesus' glorification leads directly to the cross.<sup>3</sup> Earlier in this gospel, Jesus had said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:23-24). The time of his death is very near, and Jesus knows it. Rather than drawing back from the cross, Jesus asks his Father to be there with him, accomplishing his divine purposes through the cross so that on the other side of the grave, Jesus might glorify the Father. Even as the cross draws near, Jesus remains faithful and true to the work set before him.

Jesus' faithfulness is also evident in verse 4, "I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do." The work of salvation is not yet accomplished, and we will come back to this, but notice what Jesus is saying here: the work that the Father gave him to do is more than the work of the cross. This tells us that everything that Jesus did in word and deed — his teaching, his rebuking, his truth-telling, his healing, his raising the dead, his driving out demons, his praying — all of this was part of the work that the Father gave Jesus to do. Nothing was superfluous or unnecessary, and all of it brought glory to God. Jesus is faithful and true in what he says and does.

Praying for his disciples, Jesus says, "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world" (v. 6). Bible scholar Craig Keener says that this likely includes the revelation of God's very character and identity,<sup>4</sup> as well as God's mighty acts in creation and human history. Jesus is faithful and trustworthy in what he teaches his followers about the Father.

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<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Jonathan Landry Cruse for the recommendation to study Christ's faithfulness through the lens of John 17. Cruse, Jonathan Landry, *The Character of Christ: The Fruit of the Spirit in the Life of Our Saviour* (Carlisle, PA: Benner of Truth, 2023), 108 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Craig Keener connects the glory of Christ with the road to the cross. He also makes the astute observation that in his

Finally, Jesus tells his Father in prayer, "While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled" (v. 12). Jesus' disciples probably didn't even know it at the time, but when they were with Jesus, they were safe. He protected them. Jesus was loyal and reliable. He was faithful.

Here in John 17, then, we have a beautiful picture of the faithfulness of Jesus: he is true. Trustworthy. Reliable. Loyal ... Faithful.

But what about our redemption? What about the work of the cross? Was Jesus faithful to the end? One small toe wandering into sin and the whole mission would be scuttled. Think of all the ways it could have gone wrong. Think of all the ways Jesus could have sinned. He could have disrespected his parents when he was a boy. He could have told a fib. He could have overcharged a customer when he was a carpenter. He could have lusted after a woman in his heart. He could have sinned in his anger. He could have yielded to Satan's temptation in the wilderness. He could have chosen not to obey his Heavenly Father. He could have balked in Gethsemane and walked away. Think of everything that could have gone wrong. Think of everything that *would* have gone wrong if any of it depended on you or me.

But, hallelujah, it does not depend on us. It depends on Jesus. When we were lost in our sin, rebelling against God, God responded in mercy. God sent Jesus Christ, who was God made flesh, to live the perfect, faithful life that we cannot live, to die the death that we deserve for our disobedience, and to give us instead the very righteousness of Christ and eternal life as God's sons and daughters. Martin Luther called this "the glorious exchange" — Jesus takes upon himself our death, and in exchange he gives us his righteousness. Or as the Apostle Paul puts it, "For our sake, God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." We are declared "not guilty" before God Almighty because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

prayer here, Jesus is not wrestling with his impending hour, as he will in Gethsemane (i.e., "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me," Matt. 26:39). This expands our understanding of Jesus as he walks faithfully towards Calvary. Craig S. Kenner. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1053.

<sup>4</sup> Keener, 1056.

Brothers and sisters, do you know what this means? It means that as you sit here in the pew this morning or worship with us at home, you are not merely hearing about Christ's faithfulness. Although you are. We are not merely benefitting from Christ's faithfulness. Although we are. If you call Jesus your Lord and Savior, then in this moment, you are *experiencing* the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. You are *living in* the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. What do I mean?

Without a faithful Jesus, there is no faith. Without a faithful Jesus, there is no salvation. There is no reconciliation with God and with others. There is no resurrected Jesus to call on. There is no Church. There is no Table. There is no hope for a future beyond the grave, let alone one where we are united with Christ in perfect love and joy and peace.

But there *IS* a faithful Jesus! And so we can say with the Apostle Paul, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:57)! Thanks be to God because Jesus *is* flawlessly faithful, and our lives as believers are both evidence of and a moment-by-moment experience of this reality. Wow!

### **Responding to Christ's Faithfulness: John 17**

The perfection of Jesus' faithfulness and all that his faithfulness has done to bring us to God may well leave us thinking at this point, "I'm so grateful to Jesus for his faithfulness. How can I thank him by growing in Christlike faithfulness?" I'm going to share just a few quick ideas with you, beginning with John 17, where Jesus tells us what faithfulness in his followers looks like.

First, Jesus says that his disciples have kept the Father's word (v. 6). We understand God's word to be the whole of Scripture. Do you wish to be faithful, as an expression of thanks to Christ for his faithfulness? Learning, understanding and obeying God's revealed Word in Scripture is vital. (In a nutshell, **be in God's Word and obey it.**)

Second, Jesus says this: "[my disciples] know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me" (v. 8). Do you wish to be faithful, in thanks to Christ for his faithfulness? Then be all-in with the belief that Jesus is not merely a good human or a good teacher but the very one sent by the Father to accomplish God's plan of redemption. (In a nutshell, **be**

**all-in with Jesus as the one sent by God for our redemption.**)

Further on chapter 17, Jesus will ask the Father to sanctify his followers and make them completely one so that the rest of the world will both know Christ and know that the Father loves Jesus' disciples, just as the Father loves the Son. Do you wish to be faithful, in thanks to Christ for his faithfulness? Then Jesus calls you to allow the Holy Spirit to set you apart according to the values of God's kingdom rather than the world's. (In a nutshell, **be aligned with the values of God's Kingdom.**) God calls you into community with other believers where you will pursue unity rather than self-interest so that others might see Christ in you and God's love through you. (In a nutshell, **be the Church.**)

The picture that Jesus paints of faithfulness here is pretty familiar, isn't it? Be in God's Word and obey it, especially where it concerns Jesus. Be a part of the life of the Church in a way that builds unity and reveals God's love. This implies worshiping together as well as serving one another so that God's love is known and bears witness in the world. According to Jesus in John 17, faithfulness looks an awful lot like the simple and predictable spiritual disciplines that we do day by day and week by week.

### **Responding to Christ's Faithfulness: Imitating Christ in His Faithfulness**

Beyond these spiritual practices, we can learn more about growing in Christlike faithfulness by looking to Christ's own faithfulness, which Bible scholars characterize as reliable, trustworthy, true and loyal.<sup>5</sup>

**Reliable:** Can people count on you? When you say you'll show up to help, do you? Do you show up on time for work and appointments and friends? When you make a promise to your children or warn them of consequences for inappropriate behavior, do you follow through consistently?

**Trustworthy:** Do you protect confidences? Do you refrain from gossip? Are you honest in the small things, even when no one else sees or knows? (Apart from God...)

**True:** Are you genuine and not phony? Is what you think and say and do aligned, *and* aligned with God's Word? Do you hang onto your values even when they

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<sup>5</sup> E.g., Bridges, pp. 113-119; Cruse, pp. 114-17; Timothy Keller, *Galatians for You* (NP: Good Book Co., 2013, 2014),

154; Philip Graham Ryken, *Galatians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 233.

appear ridiculous to others? When a hard word is needed, do you have the courage to speak it in love?

**Loyal:** Are you steadfast in your relationships and allegiances? Do you strive to stick with relational commitments, even when they're hard? Are you a foul-weather friend as well as a fair-weather friend?

Reliable. Trustworthy. True. Loyal. These traits characterized Christ's faithfulness, and they can characterize our response to Christ more and more as we take small but faithful steps, and make small but faithful choices, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And isn't it striking how ordinary the work of pursuing Christlike faithfulness is in some ways? Tell the truth. Be in the Word. Show up when you said. Worship with the people of God. It's not necessarily easy, but it *is* ordinary, everyday stuff.

Author Glenna Marshall puts it this way: "Faithfulness is an everyday calling. It's regular, it's ordinary, it's taking a really long view of the Christian life. It's reshaping our desires for immediate fruit and committing to following Jesus for the long haul."<sup>6</sup>

### **Human Faithfulness in God's Hand**

Small acts of faithfulness in everyday life. How perfectly unremarkable. But don't be fooled: The Bible is full of stories where faithful actions, including ordinary, everyday ones, have an outsized impact. Let me share two stories:

In II Samuel 21, we encounter Rizpah. She was King Saul's second wife, his concubine. Sometime after Saul's death, a famine fell on the land for three years. When King David inquired of the Lord why, the Lord said it was because Saul had betrayed the Gibeonites and brought a blood-guilt upon his house. To make restitution, the Gibeonites demanded that seven of Saul's sons and grandsons be impaled. David had the job of choosing who would be killed, and he chose both of Rizpah's sons, as well as five of Saul's grandsons by his first wife.

After the seven were killed, they were not given a burial that same day as required in Deuteronomy (21:22-23). They were not given a burial at all but were left exposed to the elements. Rizpah took sackcloth, the cloth of mourning, and spread it on a rock near the bodies. By day she chased away the birds of the air that

came near the bodies and by night she chased away the wild animals. For days, for weeks, Rizpah kept her faithful vigil of sorrow for her sons and her husband's grandsons. She wasn't protesting. She wasn't waving a sign that said, "Down with King David!" She was simply being faithful to her family in the only way left to her.

Word of Rizpah's vigil reached King David. And he was moved to action. He went and gathered the bones of Saul and Jonathan, which had been rescued from the Philistines by the brave men of Jabesh-gilead. Then David came and gathered the remains of those who had been impaled, and he had Saul and his sons and his grandsons buried in the tomb of Saul's father Kish. The faithfulness of Rizpah moved David to treat the dead with the dignity required by God's law. Then and only then did God bring an end to the famine in the land.

And then there is the more well-known and less-harrowing story of Ruth. Ruth is told against the backdrop of the book of Judges, where God's people became successively more and more disobedient to his ways and his law. The last verse of Judges tells us that "in those days, there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes" (Judges 21:25). In contrast, Ruth, a foreigner and a widow, gives her allegiance to her mother-in-law, Naomi, who is also a widow, and these two very vulnerable women travel together from Moab to Israel.

Once settled, Ruth works to support herself and her mother-in-law by gleaning grain in the fields of Boaz, who is distantly related to Naomi. She faithfully obeys Naomi and follows her advice when it looks as if marriage with Boaz might be a possibility for Ruth. In small, everyday ways, Ruth is faithful to the work set before her. And in the end, she does marry Boaz, and she and Naomi are rescued from the hardship of their lives as widows. Not only this, but from Ruth's son Obed will come the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Our small acts of faithfulness, so small as they are, can be used by God not only in our own time, our own homes and churches and workplaces and communities but also across time and distance according to his eternal plan, which he is, with perfect faithfulness, continuing to accomplish even today.

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<sup>6</sup> Glenna Marshall, *Everyday Faithfulness: The Beauty of Ordinary Perseverance in a Demanding World*. Quoted on [crossway.org](http://crossway.org).

## Two Invitations

This week for our “faithfulness” spiritual practice, I want to invite you to reflect some more on the flawless faithfulness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Imagine some of the ways that his redemptive mission could have been derailed had he chosen the way of sin rather than the way of obedience. But he *did* choose the way of obedience because he is perfectly faithful, so spend time praising and thanking Jesus for all that he did to save us.

Finally, an invitation to the Feast of Faithfulness. Let’s face it: If the necessary faithfulness to come to this table depended on us, we would not dare come. We know how faithless we can be. We know the ways we want to be faithful but fall short. We know how it feels when we disappoint others and we think we’ve disappointed God. And we know how it feels when people we love and rely on prove unfaithful to us and leave our hearts disappointed. But thanks be to God that this feast does not depend on us but on Christ. What good news! Because of his faithfulness, the table is here. It is set, and everything is ready. So come and participate in this feast which Christ has prepared for us. Come and join in this feast, which Christ’s faithfulness has made possible for us. Amen.



### “The Next Step”

*A Resource for Life Groups and/or Personal Application*

1. Re-read John 17:1-12 together. What word, phrase or idea stands out to you and why?
2. In what specific ways was Jesus faithful in word and deed during his life and through his death on the cross?
3. Would it have mattered if Jesus had *not* been faithful to the Father? How would your life and the Church be different if Jesus’ faithfulness had been flawed?
4. In your own experience, how have day-to-day spiritual practices such as corporate worship, Scripture reading and prayer helped you grow in faithfulness? Why are they effective?
5. Reliable, trustworthy, true, loyal: Which of these aspects of faithfulness has the Holy Spirit helped you grow in recently?
6. Reliable, trustworthy, true, loyal: Where do you sense the Holy Spirit challenging you to grow in

faithfulness? What is one small, concrete action you can take in response?

7. What do the examples of Rizpah (2 Samuel 21:8-14) and Ruth (Ruth 1-4) show us about the potential impact of human faithfulness in the world? How might they encourage you to strive for and cling to Christlike faithfulness in your day-to-day life?

8. Reflect together on this week’s spiritual practice: What has it been like as you have imagined the “tightrope” of faithfulness that Christ walked—all the ways he could have failed but did not—and then praised him and thanked him for all that he did to save us by his faithfulness? How has this practice impacted the way you see Christ and yourself in Christ?



### Table to Table:

*Something for kids and adults to consider together*

Jesus is faithful, which means we can depend on him no matter what. As a family, tell each other stories about how Jesus has been reliable in your life. Together, thank Jesus for being so trustworthy and loyal.