



Key Scriptures:

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ~1 Corinthians 2:2

Summary:

In a culture where the foundations of truth are unraveling, we need to know how to keep the focus on Jesus and walk with others who see things differently than we do. We look briefly at ways of understanding truth and how the map is not the territory. This is important to keep in mind when we talk to people about “God.” If someone says “I don’t believe in God”, it makes sense to find out what picture of God they are rejecting.

We also need to understand how belief works in our world. Traditionally, Christians have thought of their beliefs as a bounded set, where one belongs to a group if they believe a common list of shared doctrines. If you agree with the list, you are in, but if you don’t you are out. In the bounded set way of thinking, all beliefs inside the boundary are equally important. But this doesn’t work today. We live in a diverse world in which all of our beliefs are regularly challenged. The idea that you happen to belong to the group that happens to believe all these things seems absurd. Instead, we should think of faith as a centered set, with a series of concentric circles.

- At the **center** is **Jesus**.
The cross defines the ultimate revelation of God’s love for us. Throughout the New Testament, the cross is held up as the final and fullest revelation of God’s character and will.
- The next ring out from the center is **Scripture**.
We trust Jesus as Lord and because he embraced the Scriptures as having authority, so do we. Faith in Scripture is anchored in Jesus’ lordship.
- The 3rd ring is what we call **dogma**,
which is the set of beliefs that are reflected in the Church’s oldest creeds. These are the confessions that all Christians have always affirmed.
- The 4th level is **doctrine**,
which refers to beliefs that various Christian groups have held. These are beliefs that various Christian groups have disagreed over, and the majority of them are related to different ways groups have interpreted dogma.
- In the outer ring we have **opinion**.
These are beliefs that various individual Christians have held, but have never adopted as official belief of any major Christian group. Most opinions are about how to interpret particular passages or themes of Scripture.

Reflection Questions:

- What stood out to you from this sermon?
- Why do we need to understand how we view God when we are talking about believing in God?
What happens when we fail to consider this?
- What is a bounded set faith?
- What kind of groups have you experienced that think this way?
- What is a centered set faith?
How does this point of view help you think about your faith?
- When you hear the word “God,” what immediately pops into your mind?
- Why is it important to know someone’s understanding of God?
- What is the difference between a bounded set and a centered set?
- What does it mean to put Jesus at the center?
- How does centered set faith help us have conversations with people who see things differently