

Sermon Outline

“LIFE IN HIS NAME”:
THE PURSUIT OF WHOLENESS AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JESUS IS THE CHRIST

JOHN 20:30-31

I. Our Hearts Are Restless

II. The Purpose for Which the Gospel Was Written

- A. John 20:30-31 gives us the main reason for which John wrote his Gospel.
- B. While John wrote his Gospel to teach many other important doctrinal truths, the central purpose for which he wrote is really *evangelistic*.
—The Gospel of John was written primarily to help us know who Jesus is; and then from there, to help us to put our faith in him, so that we may have, what John calls, “life in his name.”
- C. We can see why we are right to say that John’s Gospel addresses the deep human question of wholeness—because the goal of believing in Jesus is that we can have life.
 - 1. This *life* that John speaks about is the ultimate life that God holds out to us.
 - 2. This life is the life that will never die, the wholeness, and the completeness that the human race is longing for, and yet finds it so difficult to attain.

III. Jesus Did Many Signs (John 20:30)

- A. We begin our exploration of verse 31 by starting with the verse before it, verse 30.
- B. The “signs” (*sēmeia*) are the miracles that Jesus did during the course of his ministry.
- C. Signs point us to things and goals (e.g. train station signs).
- D. In the same way, the miracles of Jesus function as signs, because they point us away from themselves to who Jesus really is.
 - 1. Jesus’ miracles are not ends in themselves.
 - a. They are not just to feed the hungry or help the wedding host save face after his wine ran out.
 - b. They are most certainly not to entertain those who really have no desire to believe.

2. The signs that Jesus performs are meant to point people ultimately to *himself*. —They are meant to show the world that this eternal joy, life, and wholeness that we crave for are not found in the things of this world, but in Jesus alone.
3. If people go to Jesus only for more food or more health in this present age, they are missing the point. They are not understanding who Jesus is or what he is doing. They are not treating the signs *as* signs, but as ends in themselves.
4. Jesus wants his signs to guide us to himself; to encourage us to rest in him, and from there, to receive in him the wholeness you and I so desperately crave for.

E. *Are we treating Jesus as a means to an end, or is Jesus himself our end?*

1. We treat Jesus as a means to an end when we rejoice in Jesus only so long as he gives us...
 - the grades we want
 - the career of our dreams
 - the family life of our dreams
 - compliant children
 - Fill in the blank: _____.
2. We treat Jesus as a means to an end when we abandon faith in him when the going gets tough; or when nothing is working out as we think they should; or when his requirements seem too difficult.
3. We treat Jesus as a means to an end when we are more interested in the *sense* of wholeness; or in going to heaven after we die; than we are interested in actually communing with Jesus.
 - a. The Gospel of John teaches us that heaven really isn't heaven without Jesus.
 - b. The whole point of being saved from our sins is that we can be with Jesus and God forever in a relationship of mutual, self-giving love.
 - c. Is this your functional understanding of the Christian life? Is knowing God and Jesus the priority in your version of the Christian life?
4. The point that our Lord makes in the Gospel of John is that he is not simply a means to an end. He is the Way. He is also the Truth. And he himself is ultimately the Life that we so desperately seek (cf. Jn 14:6).

F. If we are to love Jesus, then we must love Jesus for who he is.

G. Yes, God gave us beautiful things to enjoy. But in the end, all earthly blessings are also signs pointing us to the eternal life that is to be found in Jesus Christ.

IV. So That You May Believe (John 20:31)

A. Why were these signs recorded? “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” (v 31).

B. In this lesson, we will consider the phrase: “but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ...”

C. The first thing that confronts us in this statement is the purpose clause: “but these are written *so that...*”

1. Once you see the phrase “so that” or “in order that” (Gk: *hina*), you should pay attention.
2. In this case, the important fact that is about to be disclosed has to do with why the signs in this book were even recorded in the first place.

D. The signs of Jesus were not recorded to...

1. entertain us when reading the Gospel of John.
2. teach us how to become better people, how to become “a better you.”

E. The main reason the signs of Jesus were recorded was “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ...”—to look away from yourself to Jesus Christ.

F. The word “believe” is an important word in the Gospel of John.

- John 1:12: “But to all who did receive him, who *believed* in his name, he gave the right to become children of God [.]”
- John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever *believes* in him should not perish but have eternal life.”
- John 3:36: “Whoever *believes* in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

G. There are many more verses that we can consider. But you get the idea: The whole Gospel of John was written for one primary purpose—to draw people to believe in Jesus and gain eternal life through him.

H. To believe in Jesus is not just to agree to information about him. It is to *trust* in Jesus alone...

1. to resurrect us from the dead (11:25-27).
2. for eternal life the way we depend on food to satisfy our hunger (6:53, 54) or on water to quench our thirst (7:37).

- I. The eternal life that the Lord Jesus speaks of isn't merely about going to heaven when we die.
—But as John 17:3 makes abundantly clear, eternal life is essentially a relationship with God and Jesus Christ. It's a relationship of mutual love between *God* and Christ, and *us*. That is the essence of eternal life. It's a relationship.

V. Jesus Is the Christ (John 20:31)

- A. Who must Jesus be to us in order for us to gain eternal life?
- B. John gives us two important answers in this verse that summarize the high view of Jesus that John wants us to embrace.
- C. But we will consider the first of these answers today: “Jesus is the Christ” (v 31).

VI. What Is Meant by “Christ”

- A. The word “Christ” (Gk: *christos*) and “Messiah” (Heb: *moshiach*) essentially have the same meaning: “one who is anointed” or “an anointed one.”
- B. To anoint is to apply oil to someone or something.
- C. In the world of the ancient Middle East, anointing served a number of purposes.
 1. Herman Bavinck points out in *Our Reasonable Faith* (p. 289), anointing was, among other things,...
 - a. To heal skin burned by the sun.
 - b. To beautify a person.
 - Psalm 104:15: “oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.”
 - Matthew 6:17: “anoint your head and wash your face.”
 - c. A sign of joy
 - Proverbs 27:9: “Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.”
- D. Anointing came to have a special place in Israel. It was also used to designate certain men as special servants of God.
 1. When a prophet (1 Kgs 19:16), priest (Lev 4:3, 5; 6:22; 8:12, 30; Ps 133:2), or king (1 Sam 10:1; 16:13; 26:11; 2 Sam 2:4; Ps 2:2; 1 Kgs 1:34) was anointed with oil, it showed that God had raised that person to perform a special work for his him and his people.

2. The anointing was itself a sign of divine empowerment of the person. The anointed person was to be revered as a representative of God to his people (see Hurtado, “Christ,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 107).
- E. Possibly by the time of the exile (cf. Dan 9:25) and through the Hellenistic period, the term “anointed one” took on more specific meaning.
1. It referred to the great prophet, priest, or king whom God would send to restore his people and bring them back to their land.
- F. By Jesus’ time, “Messiah” or “Christ” came to refer to the supreme king, or priest, or prophet that was to come.
1. There was, of course, some debate as to whether the Messiah would be a priest or a king, or both.
 2. In one radical Jewish sect, the Essenes, there was even the belief that there was not one Messiah but two; one a priest and the other a king (Hurtado, “Christ,” 107).
 3. The Samaritan woman to whom our Lord spoke seemed to believe that the Messiah is a Prophet-Teacher who would teach God’s Word with final authority (Jn 4:25).
 4. According to N.T. Wright, it was generally accepted that the Messiah would do two key things: He would destroy the enemies of Israel and he would rebuild the temple of God (Wright, *John for Everyone: Chapters 11-21*, 179.)
- G. All this information lies in the background behind this title of “Christ” or “Messiah.”
1. For Jesus to be called Christ is to acknowledge that he is God’s Man for his people. It is to recognize that Jesus is the special Human Being or “Son of Man” through whom God would save his people from their sins.
 2. To say that Jesus is the Messiah or the Christ is not necessarily to acknowledge him as God. But it was to acknowledge him as God’s supreme Representative to his people.
 3. The Messiah is therefore the supreme Mediator between God and mankind, empowered by the Lord GOD himself to accomplish his goal for his people.

VII. Believe that Jesus Is the Christ

- A. In order to gain the eternal life that all of us long for: *We must acknowledge that this man, Jesus of Nazareth, is indeed the long-awaited Christ of God.*
1. He is the long-awaited Messiah who is to come, the true successor to all the prophets, priests, and kings of Israel.

2. Acknowledging Jesus as the Christ involves trusting this Man, whom God has chosen, to give us the eternal life that each of us longs for so deeply in our hearts.
- B. If Jesus alone is the Christ...
- Earthly governments are not.
 - No other prophet or teacher from any other major religion is.
 - the Singaporean dream is not.
 - our parents are not.
 - our children are not.
 - you and I are not.

The Quest for Eternal Life ends when we realize that we have no hope except in Jesus the Christ. Jesus is God's appointed End for our search for life, immortality, and wholeness. Jesus himself taught this: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die..." (Jn 11:25, 26). So we must go to where God has placed his eternal life. We must go away from ourselves, away from the world and its promises and pleasures, to Jesus Christ. Receive Jesus as the Life of God. Rest on Jesus for your life in God. You will receive the wholeness that you are longing for. That is the message of the Gospel of John. And that has been the will of God from the very beginning: Jesus is the heart of God's will for us (cf. Jn 1:1, 2; Eph 1:3, 5).

*Lord Jesus,
you are the Christ of God.
You are God's gift for eternal life.
In you, we find our heart's desire:
God who is Life.
We turn away from this world, its pleasures and promises.
We turn away from our striving and fighting.
We come to you alone.
Save us from our sins Lord Jesus.
Grant us eternal life.
Amen.*