

# Sermon Outline

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

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## **LIFE IN HIS NAME** (JOHN 20:31)

### **I. God’s Intentions for Us in the Gospel of John**

- A. According to John 20:30-31, the main purpose for which the signs of Jesus were recorded for us is primarily evangelistic. It is to introduce Jesus to us, and to guide us to entrust our lives to him.
  
- B. Who was Jesus?
  - 1. Jesus is the long-awaited *Christ* or *Messiah*, the special Human Being who would mediate between God and the rest of the human race.
  - 2. Jesus is *the Son of God*.
    - a. He is the royal Son of David, the rightful King of Israel.
    - b. He is the embodiment of the nation of Israel.
    - c. He is God himself.
  
- C. We come to the main blessing that results from our believing in Jesus: “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.”  
—The life of eternal wholeness and happiness that we desire may be defined as this:  
*It is life in the name of Jesus.*
  
- D. The word “that” is the same word that appears earlier in verse 30: “but these are written *so that* you may believe that Jesus is the Christ...”
  - 1. The reason the signs were recorded was *so that* we might believe that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God.
  - 2. The reason we must believe that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God is *so that* we may “have life in his name.”
  - 3. The use of two purpose clauses helps us to sharpen our focus. John really, really wants us to believe in Jesus Christ.

### **II. “By Believing”**

- A. Having gained clarity about John’s purpose, we come now to this phrase: “by believing you may have life in his name.”
- B. The phrase “by believing” can also be translated “that believing” (KJV, NASB).
- C. Belief in Jesus is a continuous act on the part of the believer, a continual response on the part of the believer to Jesus Christ.
- D. In order for one to receive eternal life, one must constantly be looking to Jesus for that life.

### III. A Word to Folks in Dry Seasons

- A. To say that we must constantly believe in Jesus does not mean that our belief will always be strong.
- B. In life, we may encounter seasons of dryness. There may be times when our faith in Jesus appears to be very small and weak.
- C. To those who wonder about the genuineness of their faith, and are deeply troubled by this question, there are two things to heed.
  1. What matters is not primarily whether you feel you have faith or not, but the act of actually *trusting* Jesus.
    - a. If we are able to do so, however weakly or poorly, that is a good sign, because it means that the Holy Spirit is with you.
    - b. If the Holy Spirit is with us, it means that faith is still there. You are still a believer in the Lord Jesus. You are still a child of God.
  2. We do not grow in faith primarily by studying your own faith, or analyzing every motive and action. We grow by fixing our eyes on the object of your faith, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ.
    - a. In dry moments in life when we don't feel that God is with us, the last thing you should do is to stop praying or reading your Bible.
    - b. Instead, we fix our eyes on Jesus by...
      - Reading the Scriptures
      - Praying
      - Partaking of the Lord's Table
      - Fellowshiping with God's people.
    - c. In other words, we keep on doing the things we need to be doing in order to help you look at Jesus more clearly. And over time, you may feel your faith keeping up.
- D. As the Scripture teaches, this belief in Jesus, though weak, is to be an ongoing and continual response. Our belief in Jesus needs to be a constant resting in Jesus as the *Christ* and the *Son of God*.

### IV. Life in His Name (John 20:31)

- A. What do we gain by believing in Jesus? John says, "life in his name."
- B. Here is that great and powerful word that we all love, the word "life" (ζωή).
- C. To give us an idea of how central this idea of life is in the Gospel of John, consider these verses.
  - John 1:4: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."
  - John 3:15: "that whoever believes in him may 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."

- John 4:14: “but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”
  - John 4:36: “Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.”
  - John 5:21: “For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.”
- D. Eternal life is not a peripheral or side issue in John. It is the central concern for which John’s Gospel was written.
- E. God says to us, through his servant John, that life is found “in his name” or (as some other translations may have it) “through his name.” The name of Jesus.
- F. The name of Jesus denotes the *person* of Jesus himself.
- G. Why believe in this man, Jesus of Nazareth? Why abandon the Singapore dream and put your hope in some Jewish peasant who lived more than 2,000 years ago? *Because this man, Jesus of Nazareth, is the place where God welcomes the world back to himself.*
1. Jesus never held a PSLE certificate. Yet, he is the embodiment of wisdom (1 Cor 1:30).
  2. Jesus never entered an institution of higher learning. Yet, he is the very Word that sustains the universe (cf. Heb 1:3).
  3. Jesus never took up arms. Yet, he is the power of salvation for all who believe (1 Cor 1:24).
  4. Jesus never held political office. Yet, he is the rightful King of the universe (cf. Phil 2:9-11).
- H. To whom are we to go if it is our desire to gain eternal life, wholeness, and happiness for ourselves? Only to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

## V. If Life Is in His Name, Then It’s Not in...

- A. If eternal life is in the name of Jesus alone, then it is *not in our names*.
1. You and I cannot save our own souls, because we are sinful.
  2. Our good works are tainted by sin.
  3. Westminster Confession of Faith 16:5:  
*We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin, or eternal life at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come; and the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom, by them, we can neither profit, nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins, but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants: and because, as they are good, they proceed from his Spirit; and as they are wrought*

by us, they are defiled, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.

4. While the Christian *will* produce good works by the grace of God, these works are not the cause of our eternal life. Only Jesus is.
5. If life is in Jesus' name alone, then life isn't gained by...
  - how well I pray
  - how well I know the Bible.
  - how active I am in church activities.
6. While all those things are good (and most are necessary), they are not what finally saves us. What saves us is Jesus—and Jesus alone.
7. If eternal life is not in us but in the name of Jesus alone, then it is not gained by the many other efforts that you and I may exert. It is not accomplished...
  - by establishing/securing our own positions of influence in this world.
  - by gaining more control over our own destinies.
  - by accumulating more pleasures for ourselves.
8. These are the kinds of works that people do to gain some sense of eternal life.
9. Even believers who should know better often approach their works with this sort of self-saving attitude.
  - a. How do you know that you could be falling back into a self-serving, self-saving works-based mentality?  
*Ans: When your busyness hinders you from looking out for the needs of others—especially others who cannot repay you for what you do.*
10. It seems fair to say that it is when people depend on their works to establish some sense of eternal life that even greater problems emerge.
  - a. Sins like greed, adultery, lying, or theft come about because the people who do these sins think that they can secure their own wellbeing through such desperate measures.
  - b. Behind almost every sin is a works-based mentality. Many of our sins are attempts to secure some aspect of eternal life for ourselves, whether it be a sense of security or a sense of dignity.
  - c. If life is in Jesus' name alone, then we don't have to resort to such means, because at the end of the day, eternal life is a free gift from God through Jesus Christ.
  - d. Once we see this, we realize that we can throw aside all the sinful ways that we have used to establish ourselves in this world. We can go on to find our lives in Jesus alone, go on to point people to Jesus alone for life.

B. If eternal life is in the name of Jesus alone, it is *not in the name of the prophet Moses*.

1. The Gospel of John draws a distinction between Moses the *Law-Giver* and Jesus the *Life-Giver*. The Gospel also makes clear which of these two men of God is greater.
  - John 1:17: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."
  - John 5:39-40: "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life."

2. John is *not* saying that Moses is evil.
  - a. The Law...
    - i. was ultimately from God himself.
    - ii. shows us God's perfect righteousness.
    - iii. tells us what God requires of us on a daily basis.
  - b. But the Law only grants life to those who fully obey it.
  - c. The Law can show us what God expects of us in terms of our conduct in this world. It can praise good conduct as well as condemn bad conduct.
  - d. Since there will always be badness in our lives until we go home to God, we will always be under the condemnation of the Law.
  - e. If we are ever to be saved, there has to be another source of life for us.
  - f. This source of life is the One who has kept the Law for us and died for our sins. And he is our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Why is it important that we distinguish between Christ and Moses? Why is it necessary for us to point out that God's favor is through Jesus and not through Moses?
  - a. Because our salvation is at stake.
 

—Galatians 3:10: "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.'"
  - b. Because we have a natural tendency to either take too much pride in our good deeds; or fall into despair and self-pity when we fail.
4. If eternal life is in Jesus' name and not in Moses', then life is not gained by our attempts at obeying the Law of Moses. Nor will life be lost if we fail to obey the Law of Moses. That is very good news for sinners!
5. This also brings a massive implication for how we seek to bring about change (repentance) in ourselves, our children, and our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.
  - a. If life does not come by way of the Law, but by way of Christ, a person cannot turn from sin or grow in holiness apart from a life-giving relationship with the Lord Jesus—a relationship that is itself initiated by simple faith.
  - b. If life is in Jesus alone, then any attempt to change bad people into truly good people that bypasses the Lord Jesus is not only doomed to failure. It is itself ultimately a form of rebellion.
  - c. It is rebellion because...
    - i. it minimizes the expectations of God.
    - ii. it minimizes the extent of our own sinfulness.
    - iii. it denies Jesus Christ his right to be the only viable Source of eternal life for the world.
  - d. We must always offer Jesus to one another as our Source of life and obedience.
    - i. It's not enough to merely tell people what God wants them to do and what they are doing wrong.
    - ii. In the course of our instruction, encouragement, exhortation, etc., we must also show our friends that true obedience to God is a gift from Jesus alone.

—John 15:5: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

## **VI. “Except Through Me”**

- A. The religion/spirituality that arises from the Gospel of John and the Bible as a whole is not a purely introspective or legalistic religion. It is, from first to last, a Christ-dependent, Christ-focused religion.
- B. Jesus himself says in John 14:6: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
- C. The world needs Christians to show them an alternative to all the false ways in which they are seeking eternal life, whether in self-centered pleasure...or in self-centered, self-righteous moral reform.

**God knows that we desire life. He knows that we desire fulfilment. There is nothing wrong with having this desire. But God wants us to go to where life is found. And over and over again, God tells us that life is in Jesus Christ alone. And this life is for all kinds of sinners. It’s for rich sinners and poor sinners. It’s for young sinners and old sinners. It’s for male sinners and female sinners. It’s for gay sinners and straight sinners. It’s for Roman Catholic sinners and Calvinist sinners. Let this be the rule that you and I live under every day. Let this also be the primary message that the world hears most loudly from us: God wants us to have life. And this life is in Jesus Christ, his Son!**