

Sermon Outline

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

JESUS, SOURCE OF OUR WHOLENESS (JOHN 1:19-34)

I. Introduction

II. Jesus, the Bringer of God (John 1:32)

- A. Jesus is *YHWH who is returning*: “He said, ‘I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said” (v 23).
- B. This Lord YHWH is the covenant-keeping God of Israel.
1. He is the God who chastised his people for their sins.
 2. In spite of all the abuse that they heap on him, he still loves them.
 3. When Jesus comes, he returns as this Lord of his people. He comes to become, once again, the King and the Husband of his people (cf. Jn 3:29).
- C. The God who comes to us in Jesus Christ already knows full well the kind of people that we are. He knows...
- all the ways we have failed him.
 - how prone we are to wander.
 - there are areas in our lives that we prefer not to have anything to do with him.
 - all our most embarrassing secrets.
- D. Yet, he still comes to us in love.
1. Consider the following Scriptures:
 - 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.”
 - 1 John 4:10: “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”
 - Romans 4:5: God “justifies the ungodly.”
 - Ephesians 2:4, 5: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ...”

- 1 Timothy 1:15: “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.”
- 2. Long before we could even give our response of love to the Lord, the Lord came to us in love.
- E. It is immensely difficult to believe that God loves us greatly.
 1. Our remaining sins
 2. The hardships of life
 3. The fiery darts of the devil
- F. The devil has a vested interest in getting God’s children to doubt the affection of their heavenly Father. That way, he can keep us away from God.
 1. The devil suggests to us that we should draw the conclusion—from the fact that we still sin, from the fact that we have so many hardships in our lives—that God must not like us very much and that he must be out to get us.
 2. Instead of seeing God as a Father who uses every moment in our lives (happy or sad, good or bad) to draw us back to him, we start seeing God primarily as a stern disciplinarian who is out to “get” us in every possible way.
 3. The love of God is pushed into the background and the chastisements of God become the main thing—when we should see things the other way.
 4. The love of God is the main thing. His chastisements, if or when they do come, are but one temporary, short-lived application of his love.
 - Psalm 30:5: “For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime...” (Ps 30:5).
 - Hebrews 12:6: “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”
- G. The God who comes to us in Jesus Christ brings forgiveness and the full reality of his love. “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (Jn 1:17).
 1. If we have truly believed in Christ, this is the God who now oversees and guides our entire lives.
 2. The deepest reality for the Christian is not condemnation, pain, or competition, but “the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:39).

○ We gain a greater sense of wholeness/peace when we accept that the God who comes to us in Jesus Christ is the God who is for us, the God of holy truth, grace, and love.

III. Jesus, the Bringer of Forgiveness (John 1:29)

- A. Jesus is “*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*” (v 29)
- B. Forgiveness is the foundation of God’s (renewed) relationship with his people (Jer 31:34).
- C. Whenever we turn from our sins back to God, when we take the desperate step of trusting in Jesus to save us, God considers all of our sins—past, present, and future—to have been removed by Christ.
 - 1. We are free from God’s revenging anger once and for all (cf. WLC 77).
 - 2. God neither requires nor desires any more punishments/sacrifices from us to appease his righteous anger (Heb 7).
 - 3. When our Lord Jesus said, “It is finished” (Jn 19:30), it truly is finished!
 - 4. Whenever the Father chastises his children now, it is out of deep love and affection, not spiteful anger.

○ We gain a greater sense of our wholeness when we accept that the Lamb of God has removed our sins, and that God is no longer angry at us anymore.

IV. Jesus, the Bringer of Purification

- A. To gain a greater sense of wholeness, we must accept that *Jesus is the One who washes us with the Holy Spirit*.
—“I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit’” (v 33).
- B. The baptism of the Holy Spirit may be understood as *washing or purification*.
 - 1. Just as water washes our external filth away, the Holy Spirit washes away our moral filth.
 - Ezekiel 36:25: “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.”
 - 2. Idols are false gods that we worship in place of the true God.
 - 3. The gods that our society worships are not necessarily evil in themselves.
 - a. Most of these gods began life as pretty good things: approval, personal success, a good reputation, the acquisition of knowledge, etc.—all good gifts of God.

- b. Things go wrong when we start treating these things as *absolutes*; i.e, when we start looking to them for only what God himself can give.
 - c. We love our idols so much—to the point of doing destructive things on account of them—because we think that they can satisfy our deepest needs.
 - d. But being hooked to an idol is like being in a toxic relationship with an abusive friend, spouse, or parent.
—The idol takes a lot out of you—time, family, energy, youth—but gives you absolutely nothing in return.
 - e. Idols will fail us and leave us in shambles.
4. The Gospel is that the Lord God has come to destroy the idols. The Lord Jesus Christ comes to sever the toxic relationships we have with our idols—and set us free once and for all.
- Ezekiel 36:25: “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.”
 - 1 John 3:8: “Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”
5. When we entrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, he baptizes us with his Holy Spirit and sets us free.
6. “But what about my struggle with this or that sin? What about my present addiction to _____?”
- a. The fact that you detest your addiction and that you want to be free is an indicator that you are under the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 7:22-24).
 - b. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a once-and-for-all liberation.
 - c. Your addiction to a particular sinful habit/pattern doesn’t change the fact that you are objectively free from your idols.
 - d. You don’t owe your idol any more attention or affection, because you have come under a new King who truly loves you.
 - e. Trust in God’s promise. And start taking small steps out of your (unlocked) prison cell. If you need help, get some friends to come alongside you.
—The full experience of freedom may come later. But first, you need to see that the stone at the entrance of the tomb has already been rolled away and the guards are no longer there.
- C. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is *the replacement of idols with the true, life-giving God*.
- 1. When God frees us from our idols, he doesn’t leave us with nothing.

2. God is not an idol. He doesn't promise what he cannot give. He does not take and give nothing in return.
3. The baptism of the Holy Spirit doesn't only involve the washing away of sin or idols. It is the replacement of those things with the Holy One who is himself the true Life and the true Love.
4. When the Lord Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit upon the Church following his ascension, he brings God himself right into our midsts, right into our hearts, in fulfilment of the new covenant. God is here to stay. We become temples of the Holy Spirit.
5. You don't need your idols anymore. You have God.
—And God dwells in you, *not* as the Destroyer of your soul, *not* as the grumpy Disciplinarian of your heart, but as the eternal fire of Perfect Love, the unending river of Eternal Life.

○ We gain a greater sense of our wholeness when we accept that the God who comes to us in Christ has freed us from all our idols and has come to live in us as eternal life and love. Therefore, we need not and must not allow ourselves to be enslaved to cheap, blood-sucking idols. The very love that was before the universe began—the love between the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is now in us, because God is in us. God delights in us!

V. Jesus is (Still) the Answer

How does Jesus help me in my quest for wholeness today? Why should I not sell my soul to my career? Why should I not allow the verbal abuse of others to break me? Why can I live with happiness even when there are things breaking down all around me? The answer to all those questions comes down to one truth: *The Lord Jesus Christ*. Jesus is God-with-us and God-for-us. Jesus has removed our sins. He has freed us from our idols. He has brought God himself to us. Believe this. And leave the tomb.

Questions for Reflection

1. How does Jesus help me in my quest for wholeness today? How does knowing that Jesus is (a) God-for-me, (b) the sin-removing Lamb of God, and (c) the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit help me get a deeper sense of the wholeness I have in him?
2. How do those truths affect your relationship with God? How do they change your disposition toward God? How can you relate to God and show God your love? How does your new relationship with God affect your relationships with others?