
LIFE IN HIS NAME

IN JESUS WE SEE

John 12:44-50

And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

John Chapter 12 one more time. This will probably be our last message in John 12. We have taken our time going through this particular chapter. It is the conclusion of this part of the book of John. It is the conclusion of Jesus' public ministry. Everything that happens from this point forward will happen privately -- Jesus with his disciples, his closest followers, teaching them about what it means to be a follower, teaching them about his departure. Then we will observe/witness/be a part of his crucifixion, his resurrection, and his ascension.

A very rich portion of scripture is coming up, but an important conclusion is here in John 12. We observed last week that as John is wrapping this up, he wants to answer a question, and that question is: Why have the Israelites not all believed in Jesus? Why is there unbelief, considerable unbelief?

Last week we looked at an explanation that John himself gives. It's a troubling explanation if we are honest with ourselves, because he tells us that in significant part it is the judgment of God. The Israelites had disobeyed God, had not obeyed his invitation, his command to follow him in the way that he had called them to do, and a judgment of God was pronounced -- a judgment of blindness, a judgment of a hard heart. We see this picture of God that shows us that God is in *absolute* control. He is *awesome* and *fearful*.

But that same message delivers to us a message of hope, and we are going to hear a lot more about that hope in this paragraph. But let me just say this. **We talk about the hope that comes because the emphasis here is that nothing is out of reach for God. Even the human heart is not out of God's reach, and God is able to do anything.** So that means when you are in trouble and when you pray, and when you pray for a loved one, you can confidently believe that God is able to do what you are asking him to do.

The first reason we observed was that God has done this. It's an act of judgment. That has so many implications. We tried to draw some of them out last week. But then there was this wonderful second explanation, where John talks about glory. He tells us that we have a glory disorder, that mankind craves praise from other people. We crave the glory of man. That's my word: "crave," but that's what John exposes. He tells us that many of the people that observed Jesus were not drawn to, but rejected his unique display of glory. He tells us that Jesus is magnificent, majestic, powerful. He is the king, on the one hand, he is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but he is also the one who suffers. He is the one who serves. He is the one who comes in humility to take our sin upon himself so that Mark can tell us in Chapter 10, verse 45 that the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. And John tells us that not everyone found that appealing.

The hope message coincides with this glory disorder that we suffer from in this regard -- that there is hope to overcome that dysfunction. Listen very carefully: **As we see and behold the glory of Jesus, we are set free from our glory disorder.** We are transformed as we see Jesus. So, if last week was all about unbelief and *not* seeing, today's message is about belief and seeing.

I was away on a little retreat this week and I was flying home yesterday. My flight was delayed and the flight was completely filled, so we were there for extra time and I couldn't find a seat. I'm looking for a seat, I'm looking for a seat. Finally, after quite a while I found a seat right beside this gentleman. I look over and he says to me, "Pastor Brian? You don't recognize me?" Then his wife is standing right there: "You don't remember us?" After some discussion, I realized they were here, part of this church, many years ago. They went away to Calvary Chapel. That's what happens when you go to Calvary, you just get forgotten. *Totally* kidding. Please do not tell my friend, Pastor Doug, that I said that, and please don't go to Calvary. Stay here!

We had a wonderful reunion and after we got reacquainted I did remember them. Then we were standing in line to get on the plane. I'm on the phone with Beth, telling her I'm running late, and there's a different woman standing in the terminal, looking right at me. She has her eyes wide open. It seems to me that she is saying, "Don't you recognize me?" I'm thinking, "Wow, how is this possible?! I can't remember anything! I don't know that lady for the *life* of me." I'm on the phone and she just keeps staring right at me, so I'm just going to talk on the phone. I put my head down; I'm talking on the phone. This goes on for several minutes, then I turn around to discover that her husband is right behind me, like on my shoulder, and she is looking at him, not at me. I wanted to kiss him. I'm so glad he was there.

Now, something happened in that transaction where I gained new knowledge that completely changed my perspective, and Jesus gives us sight in that sense. We gain new knowledge that we never had before that just changes our world, changes our perspective. But listen, he does more than that. **He gives us an ability to see that we previously did not**

have. He changes our hearts. He opens blind eyes and gives us spiritual sight. In Jesus we see. There is an informational aspect to that, but it's more. It's the capacity to see and enjoy and take in what we previously were unable to do. So we are going to look today at that, and I want to draw this contrast as we jump in.

Last week in verses 39 and 40, speaking this word of unbelief, this word of judgment, John now quotes Isaiah and he says: "Therefore they *could* not believe. For again Isaiah said, 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.'" The implication there (we looked at it last week) is that if you see and you understand and you turn to God, he will not reject you. But they had rejected God, turned their back on God, and God reached a point where he said, "Fine, I'm going to leave you in your darkness," and in his judgment they lost sight of God, by the act of God. It's a sobering passage.

Now, notice this. That paragraph began in the middle of verse 36. If you've got your bible open, look at the end of verse 36, where we read: "When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them." Jesus goes into hiding, then John gives this explanation about the judgment of God and our problem with glory. Now look at the first part of today's text, verse 44: "And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me."

I want to draw attention to that contrast. Jesus goes and hides himself and what follows is: They can't see. Jesus is in hiding, but more than that, there is this prophecy that God has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts. They can't see because of God's judgment. Now, Jesus stands up in Jerusalem and pronounces this invitation to come and believe.

There are several things that we could see in that, but part of it is unpacked for us in Romans 9, 10, and 11. I'm not going to go there now, but I do want to draw attention to it, because I think this is one of the places where the gospels line up so well with what's written in Paul's letter to the Romans. The door for spiritual understanding is closing on Israel. He came as their Messiah, and in that rejection, now the door is opening for the nations. **God had called Israel to be a light to the nations. Now Jesus will be a light to the nations.** Of course, in this passage he talks about being the light of the world.

I want to unpack this under two major points: "What we see" and "How we see." Let's get started with "What we see."

I. **What do we see?**

1. **First of all, we see the Father, verses 44 and 45.**

“And Jesus cried out and said, ‘Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.’” This is something that John has said over and over. He has quoted Jesus saying it over and over. The idea here is that when you see Jesus you see the Father. Jesus came to make the Father known. In fact, at the end of today’s text Jesus talks about a commandment. But what’s curious about this commandment is that it’s not one that he gives to us, it’s one that the Father gives to him. That is very strong language. It’s Jesus emphasizing something, saying to you, “Listen, everything I say, everything I do is to make the Father known to you. I’m doing *exactly* what he tells me to do. I’m saying *exactly* what he says for me to say.”

Later in John 14 Philip is talking with Jesus. Jesus says to him, “Philip, if you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.” So the first thing that Jesus opens our eyes to see is God the Father. Think about that for a moment. Just think about it. **God loves you so much that he sends his son from glory to come to set you free from sin and darkness that you might see him and know him and have a relationship with him. God desires for you to know him!** Jesus is crying out, “I am the representative of the Father! I am the Father’s representative to you. I come to make him known.” The first thing that we see is the Father.

2. The second thing we see is everything.

Verse 46: “I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.” When we see Jesus, we move out of a condition of darkness and into a condition of light. C.S. Lewis famously said, “I believe that the sun exists, not just because I see it, but by it I see everything else. I believe in Jesus Christ, not just because I see him as the light of the world, but by him I see everything else.” Jesus transforms us. A relationship with Jesus Christ is not only a relationship with the Father, but it brings spiritual understanding to everything. The man who is loved by God and knows Jesus will love his wife in a different way. **We are transformed and we see everything differently when we know the Lord.**

I don’t know about you guys, but I was so blessed in baptism today. It was just amazing, wasn’t it? It was great. Jesse was full, wasn’t he? I’m going to have to preach for ten minutes less because he took at least five minutes of my time. I’m going to have to preach a little less, which I am happy to do. I was so blessed, Jesse, by your words, your explanation, the Spirit of God speaking through you. It reminded me of a time when I baptized a brother. He came back the next Sunday and told me this. He said, “Brian, I can’t explain it, but I went outside and the grass was greener.” **Jesus impacts our lives in a way that changes everything.**

3. We see eternal life, verses 47-50.

Jesus states: “If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.” Hold your finger right there at verse 49 and let me explain. Jesus is saying, “In one sense, I come into a world that’s already under the judgment of God because of sin. I don’t come to bring judgment. I come to bring salvation. That’s my delight. That’s why I’m standing up and crying out right now, so that you might hear and believe and see. But understand this. On the last day, I won’t judge you. It’s curious, yet I want you to understand it, but my words will judge you on the last day.”

Jesus is teaching us here that there will be an end to history. There will be a last day. That final day will be a day of judgment where all will give an account, standing before God. Those who have heard the words of Jesus will be judged by the words of Jesus. He is really saying to us that we will be judged according to the light that we’ve received.

That is an important principle to understand. Frequently we will ask questions: “Well, what about those who don’t hear? What about those in places where they don’t hear about Jesus Christ?” Scripture is saying that we will be judged according to the light we’ve received, and that we all need to see Jesus so that we might believe.

Continuing on in verse 49: “For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.” We have seen this theme before, but Jesus is now summarizing, in some respects, what he is all about. He is saying, “The Father sent me. I didn’t come on my own. I come in his authority. I come in his power. I am perfectly representing him. I am perfectly showing you who he is. **And my word to you as I follow the Father is eternal life.**” **Jesus gives life.**

Do you remember all the way back to John Chapter 3 when we talked about Nicodemus? He said to Nicodemus that anyone who enters the kingdom of heaven must be born again. In order to enter the kingdom of heaven you must be born of the Spirit of God. Then as we followed these themes through the book of John we discovered what? That **the word of Jesus brings life. Eternal life.**

Listen to John Owen, writing in the 1600’s, so this is 300+ years ago. It’s a little thick, but it’s so wonderful. “The teaching of the Son is a live-giving, a spirit-breathing teaching -- an effectual influence of light, whereby he shines into darkness a communication of life, quickening the dead,” (that is raising, giving life to the dead) “an opening of blind eyes, changing of hard hearts, a pouring out of the spirit with all its fruits.”

In Jesus we see the Father. In Jesus we see everything. In Jesus we see eternal life -- this life-giving, eye-opening, blindness-removing, heart-softening Jesus Christ. We are changed and we receive eternal life. The emphasis here is that we are brought to life by Jesus Christ. That life is eternal. It never ends. But that's not it. It's a quality of life in communion with God that we have never known before.

So what do we see? We see the Father, we see everything differently now in the light of Jesus Christ, and we see eternal life. That allows us in wonderful celebration and worship to sing songs like we sang today. **For me to live is Christ. With every breath that I have in this life I live in solidarity with Jesus Christ. He is sufficient. He gives me everything I need. I am in Christ. And you know what? I don't have to fear death because when I die I just go to be with him. It's more of what I live for, only perfectly so. For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.**

If you've been here for any length of time, I have tried to hit this theme, to say I know we don't want to die. I understand our natural resistance to death, and that through various stages of life we want to experience new things. You know, I was young. I wanted to experience falling in love and all that accompanies that. I wanted to have children. You go through these phases. You can't wait for the children to leave. I know, same joke every time. I say it over and over, but it's true in so many ways. I say to my children, "Listen, don't wish your life away because you can't wait for the next season." I say it in kidding, but the reality is that I don't want my kids to leave. By God's grace this season has been a blessing.

But here's the point: **Heaven is better. Heaven is better than everything you've experienced in this life, and everything that's good in this life will somehow be reflected in heaven, only better.** I don't know if there will be golf in heaven, but there will be something better that somehow connects in us as physical creatures, that just brings it together without the corrosion and the corruption and the pain and the sin that tries to defile everything that's good in this life.

Now the how question.

II. How do we see?

1. The first answer is by faith.

We just go back through the same verses. Verses 44-46: "Jesus cried out and said" (look at the emphasis if you're looking at the text) "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me." Do you see the connection between believing and seeing? Between faith and spiritual sight? "I have come into the world as light, so that whoever *believes* in me may not remain in darkness." That's a direct connection between

seeing and believing. If you desire to have spiritual understanding, spiritual insight, spiritual discernment, believe in Jesus Christ. Act on the faith that you now possess. Jesus encourages us in so many ways in this regard. If you possess just a little bit of faith, a mustard seed of faith, he tells us that that faith is tremendously powerful. **Act on the faith that you do have. How do we see? We see by faith.**

2. By hearing the words of Jesus, verses 47-50.

Jesus begins verse 47: “If anyone hears my words and does not keep them...” then he goes into this explanation of judgment based on his words, followed by the explanation that he’s speaking what the Father tells him to speak. He is obeying the commandment of the Father, and that command is eternal life. His words go forth to create life.

Very quickly, let’s think about this for a minute. **This tells us that the word of God is valued and precious and a pivotal part of seeing and understanding, and that rejecting the word leads to judgment. Embracing the word by faith leads to spiritual sight.** You see this naturally in life. You see someone who rejects God’s word, rejects God’s word, rejects God’s word, rejects God’s truth, and like skin that just gets calloused and rubbed over and over and over and over again, it dies and becomes calloused and insensitive to feeling. That’s what happens to our human hearts as we resist God’s word, as we resist God’s truth. We become hard-hearted. We become spiritually blind.

The reporter who’s been trained – it’s all about just getting the story. It doesn’t matter if you hurt people or if you deceive people, if you get them to talk under false pretenses, if you trap people. No matter what means, just get the story, and that reporter starts. At first it doesn’t seem right, and at first there’s grief because lives are affected and impacted and destroyed, and private things are put on display. But eventually, after repetition after repetition after repetition it just becomes a way of life. Immorality or whatever it is – we become bulletproof. The Spirit of God just cannot penetrate our hearts, and it’s tragic. It’s tragic.

In the same regard, when the word of God comes and we embrace it in faith, our eyes are opened. God’s word is powerful. Let me say it like this. There is a *teaching* aspect of the word of God where we grow in understanding. There is a *command* aspect where we obey. The word of God comes. We embrace it by faith. We gain understanding. We have something to obey. But then there’s this third element. It’s the life-giving word of Jesus Christ. **He is the way. He is the truth. He is the life. We understand. We follow. We obey. But he gives us the ability to do all of that as his word penetrates our hearts and we receive it in faith.**

Do you see it? That means that this activity is very important, not because it’s me or Adam or anyone else, but because the ministry of the word, when received by faith, gives sight. Your personal time with God is critical. It’s a time where

you can grow in understanding, where you understand what it is God wants you to obey, but especially, and I would say even more so, it's the time where you receive the power of God through the word of God, through the word of Jesus Christ. The word imparts God's life, imparts God's power.

So, your personal time with God is very important. And this corporate time is a critical time where the word publicly goes forth -- in song, in praise, in exhortation, in prayer, and in the preaching and teaching of God's word. Then a third element is small groups. It's community life. It's relationship, whether it's in a home group or a bible study here on Wednesday night, or a group of people that you are collected together with. **As you share the life of Jesus Christ, speaking into one another's lives, speaking the gospel, speaking the free grace of Jesus Christ and all that he desires and what we see in life with one another – these are important dimensions in terms of how we see and know and follow Jesus Christ.**

Two applications to end the message.

The first is: If you're here and you don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ or you are uncertain of that, believe in Jesus. Trust in him. Leave, admit, confess your sin, and look to Jesus – the savior who dies to pay the penalty of your sin, and receive freely the gift of salvation. It's not a matter of works. You cannot earn it. You cannot earn your way to God. Receive this gift of God's mercy. He came – it seems unspeakable – to serve you and to give his life as a ransom, as a payment for you to set you free from sin. Receive the grace of God today. Trust in him. Follow him for the gift that he gives you. That's one path of application. I'm sure it's fitting for a number of us here today.

The second is: If you're here and you say, "I've already started that journey, Brian. I'm already on that journey," then here's my application for you. It's to get into a pattern of receiving the word of God faithfully, with an emphasis on how Jesus Christ is all-sufficient to bring you everything you need. So open your bibles *daily*, getting into the word, meditating on the word, not just seeing. "Oh, I understand. I obey." But "Jesus provides for me all that I need" – a Christ-centered reading of the scripture. **Make the word of God a priority in your life. Live that out in community, in relationships.**

I would encourage you to get into a small group. Get into a home group. Come on Wednesday night. Find some avenue for you to connect relationally. But if none of those things are possible, just get together with two or three other people that are spending time daily with God and talk about what God is showing you as you meditate on the word of God together. Get into community. It's life-giving. Yeah, it's irritating because people can be irritating. We know that. But listen, friend, you can never grow in patience if you have no one around you to be patient with. I thought that was actually helpful.

Alright. If I could just say this for your good, make this time on Sunday morning a priority. Get here. Get here on time. Get here early. Get here with your soul prepared to worship the Lord. Statistics now tell us that average church attendance every month is 1 and a half to 2 times a month for a committed Christian, when just a couple decades ago it used to be 3 and a half to 4 times a month. That is not healthy for us, friends. This day is the Lord's Day. Settle it in your life. There are certain markers where you just do well to say: This is the pattern of my life and it's a non-negotiable. It's not legalism. It's not because God will cast me out if I don't. It's just that I need the power of God's word in my life. I need this community and God will meet me here as I do it. Amen? Did you catch the on-time part? Amen.