

Are You Ready?

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bible with you, please open it up to the Gospel of John. As we get back into the swing of things this fall, we're going to continue on in our journey through the Gospel of John.

We began this journey way back in January, and we continued the series by video once services were suspended because of COVID, right up until about the end of May, and then we kind of hit the pause button.

And summer came, a bit of an extended summer for many. Many people were traveling in a way, and many of us spent time camping, visiting family and friends.

So we were in Proverbs for a bit, but now with fall right around the corner and school starting up again, we want to get back into the swing of things as well, and we're going to pick up where we left off in John.

So let's start this morning by remembering what we've heard in this account from John so far. We're going to do a bit of a flashback here over a number of messages.

[1 : 01] If we remember back to the very beginning, we remember that John starts this story by telling us how the story of Jesus began. But of course, he starts at a different place than the other Gospel writers.

He tells us that Jesus is the Word who was at the very beginning, and that he was with God and was God back then, that through him all things were made, and that he became flesh and stepped down into our world and became one of us.

From there, we heard how John, I guess his introductory comment, he said, we saw his glory. We saw how he is full of grace and truth.

And that's been kind of something we've been looking for throughout this series, to see the glory of Jesus, how he is full of grace and truth. From there, we heard about the delegation that was sent by the religious leaders from Jerusalem out to the Jordan River near Bethany, where John the Baptizer was dunking people in the river and proclaiming that there was someone special who was coming after him.

And then, of course, we were there and heard about that moment when that someone special came. Jesus came out to John, and in front of everyone, John pointed to him and said, look, everyone, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

[2 : 38] We saw how some of Jesus' first disciples began to follow him. And we felt the excitement about who Jesus was. We have found the Messiah, said Andrew.

Rabbi, you are the Son of God, the King of Israel. Nathanael declared Nathanael in his first encounter with Jesus. And Jesus said to them, you ain't seen nothing yet.

From there, we went to Cana, where Jesus performed his first sign. He turned water into wine.

Then we followed Jesus up to Jerusalem, where he drove the money changers and sellers out of the temple courts.

Stop turning my father's house into a market. We heard about how he performed other signs and miracles there in Jerusalem, and how John and the other disciples began to see how Jesus knew things about people.

He seemed to know things that they were thinking in the quiet of their own hearts. We saw an example of this with Nicodemus, who came and acknowledged, you're doing things that nobody could do unless God were with him.

[3 : 53] And we listened in on the conversation they had about the need to be born again in order to enter the kingdom of God. We heard then about how the spotlight and the attention that was on John the baptizer began to shift now to Jesus, as the people began to go to him instead.

We followed Jesus through Samaria, and we saw how he was full of grace and truth towards the woman at the well, and the people of Sychar, many who came to believe that he was the Messiah. Then we saw Jesus go back into Galilee, where he was met with initial excitement, but also with stubborn-heartedness and unbelief.

We saw him do another amazing sign and heal the royal official's son from a distance. Now, Jesus is back in Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals.

He has just healed a man who had been unable to walk for 38 years at the Pool of Siloam. And he did this on the Sabbath.

[5 : 06] And the religious leaders have come after him with a charge of breaking the Sabbath. This is in John chapter 5. Jesus has given his defense.

Amazingly, he has not denied working on the Sabbath. He instead has claimed that both God, his Father, and he, the Son, are always at work together.

That as they do their works, they work in unison, even on the Sabbath. Let's pick up what Jesus is saying in John chapter 5, verse 19.

Jesus gave them this answer. Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself.

He can only do what he sees his Father doing. Because whatever the Father does, the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.

[6 : 13] Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these so that you will be amazed. So we spent a couple Sundays of messages reflecting...

Just go back there. I'm not doing it, eh? Maybe the battery's dead on that.

That's a good place to leave it. So we spent a couple Sundays of messages just reflecting on this profound mystery of how the Father and the Son are two persons, and yet one and the same God acting in unison.

The Father is continuously showing the Son what he is doing. And the Son is seeing what his Father is doing and acting in unison together with him.

And then in the midst of all of this conversation with the religious leaders, Jesus makes this statement. He says, yes, and he, the Father, will show him, the Son, even greater works than these so that you will be amazed.

[7 : 26] So Jesus is saying, the healing of that man who couldn't walk for 38 years, you're going to see greater things than that. Things that will cause your jaw to drop to the floor.

You'll be amazed. Now let's pause for a moment and think. What's greater than being able to heal somebody who has not been able to use his legs for almost 40 years in an instant?

That's pretty amazing. Who can do that? Nobody. Nobody but God. So what's greater than that? Well, there's not a whole lot of levels above that in terms of spectacular.

I wonder what the religious leaders are thinking here. Like, what kind of greater works is Jesus talking about?

Well, amazingly, Jesus goes right to the top of the list. Not just a little bit greater, but a lot greater. And he makes this statement in verse 21.

[8 : 34] For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

Like, whoo! That's a greater work. It's one thing to heal a living man's paralyzed condition so that he can walk, but it's a whole nother level to bring a man back to life from the dead.

There can be no doubt here. Only God can do that. And Jesus affirms that this is something that God does.

He says, For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, let's stop and think for a moment. When has God raised the dead and given them life?

At this moment in history, as Jesus stands before them, it's only happened three times that are recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures.

[9 : 41] You might remember some of those stories. By the power of God, Elijah raised the prophet. He raised from the dead the son of the widow of Zarephath.

By the power of God, Elisha raised from the dead the Shunammite woman's son. And then there was that one unnamed guy whose funeral was interrupted by a raiding party.

And so they took his body and quickly threw it into Elisha's tomb. And his body touched Elisha's dead bones and God caused his own power to flow through Elisha's dead bones.

And that guy was raised from the dead. We might say it's the ultimate miracle of healing, which God's power did.

Only three times in all human history, up until this conversation that Jesus is having, has someone been raised from the dead and given life again.

[10:44] And Jesus is looking at these religious leaders and saying, just as God does that, the Son also does that to whoever he wants, to whoever he is pleased to do it.

I've said it many times, but I would have loved to have been there just to see the look on people's faces, the reaction on their faces as Jesus said this. But it gets even better than this.

Verse 24. Jesus says, Very truly, I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged, but has crossed over from death to life.

Let me read it again. Very truly, I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged, but has crossed over from death to life.

Do you hear what Jesus is saying here? He's not just claiming to be able to give life to people like those three times in the Old Testament when dead people came back to life.

[12:22] We all know that those three individuals eventually died again. No. Jesus makes it pretty clear here that the kind of life that he is talking about giving to people is not just a second chance, here and now kind of life.

The kind of life he is talking about giving to people is eternal life. Life that goes on forever.

The never to die again kind of life. And it's here that some of us have to admit that Jesus is talking about an even greater kind of raising from the dead than we all thought he was at first.

He's talking about the ultimate resurrection. The kind that results in people not receiving the final sentence of God's judgment.

Listen to Jesus in verse 25. Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

[13:45] What is Jesus talking about?

Well I think first notice the sense of time in Jesus' words. He says a time is coming and has now come. There's a few possibilities of how to take these words but it seems to me from those words has now come that Jesus is saying that the time is here right now.

We're on the edge of it and it's unfolding right now. What time? A time when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

Now we might be tempted to think that Jesus is talking specifically about people like Lazarus or Jairus' daughter but as we just heard in verse 24 Jesus is not talking about that kind of life from the dead.

He's talking about eternal life. Ultimate life. And so it seems that Jesus is not referring to the dead dead but to the living dead.

[15:14] To those who are spiritually dead. To those who are as good as dead when it comes to God's final judgment. The time has come now says Jesus when people will hear the voice of the Son of God and when they do those who hear those who believe will cross over from death to life.

They will come alive now not with their not in their physical bodily life they already have that but with spiritual life their status in God's books forever changed.

We might think back to Jesus talking with Nicodemus about being born again receiving new life in our souls in our spirits by the Spirit of God.

But Jesus says that's just the beginning that's the first part people here and now will hear my words and believe and come alive with new eternal life that I will give them.

but the end of the story he goes right not right to it but in verse 28 he gets to it we're going to skip over a few things here verse 28 Jesus says this do not be amazed at this for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out those who have done what is good will rise to live and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned so so Jesus is talking about the full spectrum of life from the dead the spiritual life from the dead which those who hear his words and believe will receive can receive right now but he goes on to say that there will yet come a time in the future when the physically dead in their graves will hear his voice and come out and notice who he's talking about there in verse 28 a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out he goes on to say this includes both those who will rise to live and those who will rise to be condemned the righteous and the wicked those who belong to

[17 : 53] God to Christ and those who do not so in these few verses Jesus is talking about two things both spiritual life here and now that we may receive by believing in his words but also ultimate eternal life after we die at the final resurrection resurrection when all people are brought back to life to be sorted out in the final judgment and you know I had to chuckle as I was reading these words in verse 28 Jesus says do not be amazed at this do not be amazed at this and then he tells them that it's his voice the voice of the son of God that they will hear calling them out of their graves before the final judgment what a thing to say how can they not be amazed by such a statement who has ever claimed anything like this in all history of course they're amazed here's a human being a man standing in front of them telling them that he has the power to give life and raise people from the dead just like

God does and not just a temporary extension of life but permanent life that lasts forever a gift that they can receive now by hearing his words and believing them and a gift that they will ultimately open up later when he calls them out of their graves at the end of this world's story you have to know that with these words Jesus is causing a stir I mean listen to what he's saying to what he's claiming to what he's promising to people he's offering people what only God can offer them and his claim is this God has sent me to put this gracious gift on the table for you and offer it to you listen to me I have the solution to your death problem and so

I ask all of you this afternoon this morning not there yet do you believe that Jesus can give you eternal life I wonder where these words hit you this morning I wonder if some of us hear this and think well that's Christianity 101 that's the basics why are you telling me this again I know that already I've already believed that tell me something that has to do with my life here and now and the things I was doing this week but it does have to do with your life here and now yesterday I was out at the cemetery with a family as they lowered the body of a loved one into the ground and I was reminded again that sooner or later each one of us here in this room will have our turn when our families will lower into the ground what's left of our bodies the day we die is coming for each and every one of us perhaps even sooner than we might expect and when the day for our funeral comes everything we did with our lives here and now will be put into perspective nothing will be as important as the eternal spiritual life that we did or did not receive from

Jesus nothing will be as important as whether or not we listened to the words that Jesus spoke nothing will be as important as whether or not we believed them and responded to them and lived according to them here and now in every area of our lives it's easy to get caught up in this world isn't it in the cares and concerns of this world in this world's priorities even in its pleasures but are you ready for the day when Jesus voice will command you out of your grave to stand before him those who believed in him and by faith have done what is good will rise to live forever and those who did not believe and have continued on doing what is evil will rise to be condemned are you ready for that day this should absolutely change the way that we think and feel and plan and decide and live in this next week

I hope and pray that it does let's pray yeah father in heaven we thank you for these precious words that we get to be there and hear what Jesus really said to those religious leaders I pray God that you wouldn't let us just pass over these words is something that we heard a lot of before but that you would cause those words to take root in our heart please draw our attention and our affection to heaven to the things that are most important in this great story do a miracle in our hearts and in the hearts of all who call this church their home many of who are not here today we ask and pray this in Jesus name amen