

Jesus mission moving himself from life to death

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Date: 01 February 2019

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[0 : 00] All right, well, turning to John chapter 11 then, opening thought for you this morning is that Jesus has divided people for 2,000 years. Now, most agree with some things.

Most agree, for instance, that Jesus was a real person, that he lived and died in Palestine somewhere around AD 30. Most agree that he was unjustly crucified by the Roman authorities as a result of a conspiracy by the Jewish authorities.

But when it comes to why Jesus died and the significance of his death, then we see the division open up in really severe terms.

Albert Schweitzer, an influential German scholar, famously described the death of Jesus in very picturesque language. He says that Jesus was crushed by the wheel of history that he himself set in motion.

It's a very graphic picture, isn't it? What he meant was this, that Schweitzer saw Jesus as an immeasurably good man. He even called him a true revolutionary who was passionate about being God's voice for transformation in a broken world.

[1 : 17] But ultimately, says Schweitzer, Jesus' death was just a tragic accident. It was the inevitable result of bad political strategies on Jesus' part.

He got the Jewish religious authorities offside, and that was never going to end well for him. He underestimated the power of his enemies and the fickleness of public opinion.

And so everything just went bad for Jesus, and he didn't get to do what he was supposed to do, what he wanted to do. But you see, that's very different from Jesus' own teaching.

Because Jesus himself says that he died and came back from the grave very deliberately, very purposefully, sacrificially.

Why? Why? To break the power of sin and death, is what Jesus says. To demonstrate that he is both Savior and King of this world, and then to call as Savior and King, to call all in this world, to live under his rule.

[2 : 29] And indeed, Jesus would say, and we'll see more of it this morning, unless a person understands and responds to this Jesus, King and Savior Jesus, they've not got the real Jesus, but a convenient substitute or even a counterfeit.

And so the division often shows up these days among religious people. Most religious people are at odds with Jesus because religious people reduce Jesus simply to a good man who was a model of doing good things.

And therefore, if we do good things, we will be accepted by God into heaven. And that puts religious people at odds with Jesus' own teaching.

They will not accept, as Jesus teaches, that our rebellion, that our rejection of God cuts us off from God, and therefore required Jesus to die so that we might be restored to God, restored acceptance, restored relationship, and restored life.

And so the division continues right down to our own day and age. Which Jesus? And this morning we jump into the debate, as it was happening right around Jesus, unfolding almost 2,000 years ago, in response to the miracle which trumped all miracles.

[4 : 08] The one we looked at last week, the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Four days dead, a rotting corpse, Jesus reverses the rottenness and calls Lazarus out of the grave as a newly formed person.

And around that, the division opens up. So let me just recap the first 10 or 11 chapters of John. So John builds his biography, and that's what this Gospel of John is.

It's really just a biography of the life of Jesus. Well, John builds the first half of it around seven signs or miracles. And each of those miracles point to Jesus and comes with an extended teaching from

Jesus.

And the miracle and the extended teaching together establish and illustrate his identity, his character, and his mission. And throughout the ministry of Jesus, which we estimate somewhere around three years, Jesus repeatedly teaches that he is the reality of everything pictured, everything promised in the Old Testament, that period leading up to his birth.

Jesus says, I am the reality of all those things. I am the fulfillment of all those things promised. The reality of all those things pictured. All those things actually defined God's covenant people as nation Israel.

[5 : 32] All of those things are finding their reality now in me. And so at the very start of his ministry, the first miracle was turning water into wine at the wedding.

And that pointed to the fact that Jesus was here to offer a fresh start to God's tired and disillusioned and failing people. The new wine of the Gospel would replace the failed wine of Old Testament Israel.

And Jesus went on in that section to claim that he was the new temple. The place where God's people would come to now to have their sin dealt with and experience new births into new relationship with God.

And the next miracles were the healing of a young boy and a severely crippled older man. And they pointed to the reality that Jesus was God. Only God could do that sort of stuff.

And that he was with God and one with the Father in this mission to heal people from the disfiguring effects of sin.

[6 : 37] Sin and illness and death. Then he fed more than 5,000 people from a schoolboy's lunchbox. Then he walked on the Sea of Galilee coming to rescue and deliver his disciples when they were hopelessly caught up in a storm in the middle of the sea and were going to die.

And these miracles point to his compassion. His compassion for his people. His commitment to rescuing them from destruction.

His commitment to providing the essentials of life, bread and water, that will satisfy our deep thirst of hunger. Our deepest need of hunger and thirst.

Sorry. And then he moves on to healing a blind man. Literally, quite literally, moving the man from darkness to light and life. And the teaching around that says that believing in Jesus is the pathway to receiving sight, true sight.

And that leads into the passage on Jesus being the good shepherd. Recognizing Jesus as the good shepherd. Who has come to find his lost sheep. And calls them into light and life and safety.

[7 : 52] But the crescendo is the good shepherd. And the good shepherd. But the crescendo was last week. The seventh miracle. The end of his public ministry. The crescendo is Jesus moving Lazarus from death to life.

Clearly, among all the other things that Jesus is, he is also the conqueror of death. Conqueror of death and conqueror of Satan who held the power of death.

And that miracle trumped all other miracles. Illustrating his claim from the very beginning of his ministry. He said he had come into the world to dispel darkness and death.

Which are the inevitable consequence of sin or rebellion against God. And replace them with light and life. Which are the inevitable consequence of renewed relationship with God.

And forgiveness from sin. So John concludes his record of Jesus' public ministry. Not surprisingly, with yet more mixed response to all of this.

[9 : 09] Mixed response to Jesus. As I said before, division has been a constant theme in Jesus' ministry. And not surprisingly so. Because the whole point of this is. That as people observe Jesus and hear his teaching.

They're forming conclusions about him. On the one hand, many believed. Verse 45. Very simple but profound voice.

A verse. Many believed. After hearing Jesus' teaching. And saying with their own eyes. The power that Jesus had to deliver on his teaching.

I am the one who can move people from death to life. People believed. They'd seen Jesus reassemble a rotting corpse.

They believed. Like Martha in verse 27. They didn't necessarily understand how it all worked. But they recognized Jesus has to be God's king and savior.

[10:17] And as they believed that. Then they could see the glory. Of Jesus and his father. In this mission of salvation. And from there. They gladly aligned themselves. To live under his rule and authority.

But as usual. Verse 46. There was rejection. Some people. At the same time as many were believing. Some in the crowd were so offended.

By what they saw. And what they heard. That they went straight to the Jewish religious authorities. To dub Jesus in. And I suspect. It was with malice.

Knowing. That that would. Expedite. The whole process. That was simmering under the surface. Of somebody taking action. To silence Jesus. And then verses 47 and 48.

We see a different reaction. A reaction of fear. Deep fear. Of losing personal sovereignty. Look at verse 47 and 48. So the chief priests and the Pharisees.

[11:25] Gathered the council and said. What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this. Everyone will believe in him. And the Romans will come.

And take away both our place. And our nation. Fear. When they receive.

The political and religious leaders. The council. Or the Sanhedrin. When they receive the news.

About Lazarus' resurrection. They did spring into action. They called a meeting.

But their agenda. Wasn't what we might expect it to be. Their agenda. Was not to rejoice. At the very obvious power. Of Jesus. And a life restored.

Nor was their agenda. To try and discover the truth. And understand. And the Lord's work among them. Through this person Jesus. Their meeting.

[12:27] And their agenda. Was driven by fear. For these guys. Jesus. Constituted. No more. Than a serious threat. To their lifestyle.

And remind. I need to remind you. These guys. Had an affluent lifestyle. They had lots of money. Coming in. Through the temple. And through. Their leadership. They had political power.

By the bag full. And that's what they saw threatened. By Jesus. Their agenda. In other words. Was self-interest. Even though.

The responses. Cleverly. Put spin on it. Disguised it. With. Pious concerns. Pious sounding concerns. Anyway. As though they were acting. For God's honor. And acting.

For the good. Of God's special people. Sounds a bit familiar. Doesn't it? You see. For these guys. The divide.

[13:27] Opens up. Like this. Fear. Of the Romans. Taking away. Their power. And their source. Of wealth. Was greater. Than their fear.

Of God. Over sin. And not only that. But it blinded them. To what God was doing.

In their midst. Through Jesus. All they could see. Was the business options. Under threat. And were blinded.

To what Jesus was doing. He had come to deliver them. From that very thing. Darkness. And light. And light. Everything revolved.

Around them. Our nation. Our position. Our place. These guys. Even though they're the leader. Of God's people.

[14:23] These guys. Were convinced. That the future. Salvation. Of the nation. Lay with them. And their strategies. Political strategies. And not with God.

God. God. And ultimately. That led to murder.

Verses 49 through 53. Caiaphas. You can almost picture. Sitting in the background. Hands behind his head. Suddenly pipes up.

Obviously frustrated. With all the banter. That's been going back and forth. And he said. You guys have no idea. There's only one feasible solution. To our dilemma. Somebody needs to say it.

Somebody needs to commit to it.

Let's do it. We need to kill Jesus. That's the tone of those verses. Self-interested fear.

[15:20] Fear. Became a joint decision. To murder Jesus. Why? Quite simply. Because he was a threat.

To their personal sovereignty. And that's an incredible irony. Isn't it? The one who came to save.

And deliver. Would be destroyed. Out of fear of their enemies. By the leaders of God's people. And that. We're told during the Passover feast. That's when it was all going to happen.

The Passover feast. In which God's people. Celebrated God's salvation. God's deliverance. From their enemies. By his special prophet. Moses. The irony is just palpable.

And against that. As John loves to do. In his biography. He contrasts. He contrasts. The single-minded response. From Jesus. In the face of hostility. Rejection.

[16:26] And just unmitigated evil. Jesus always moving. Towards his father. And his father's glory.

And glory for them both. See. A major theme. Throughout the whole biography. Has been. A major theme. In Jesus teaching. Has been. That he is one in nature.

With his father. And in his father's salvation purpose. Salvation plan. Jesus had just restated that very thing. Just before he called Lazarus.

Out of the grave. You look back to verse 41 and 42. He had that prayer. Which he quite consciously said. This. I'm not praying this for my benefit. I'm praying that for the benefit of everybody. That's standing around. Listening and looking. So that you understand.

That I and the father are one in this. Every action of Jesus. Through his whole ministry.

[17:25] Was a joint operation with his father. To save God's people. By dying. To reverse the effects of sin. And now.

We've got another irony operating here. Because this story is operating at two levels. Caiaphas. Thinks he's solving a personal problem. But the Lord.

Is using Caiaphas. To affirm the truth. Of Jesus ministry. Even as he utters the words. Which become the death sentence. For Jesus.

Because that's what he said. Look at verse 50. Under. God's influence. Caiaphas. Is speaking God's word. Or prophecy. So these are God's words. We're reading here.

And look at what. Look how it starts. And I'm indebted to. John Piper. For this. This phrase. Or this idea. Verse 50. It is better. It is better for you.

[18:27] That one man should die. Now that's God's word. It's better. That one man should die. Better that Jesus should die. Huge call isn't it?

And I'm so indebted to Piper. For helping me say that. It is better for you. That one man should die. For the people.

Not that the whole nation. Should perish. What a huge statement. By the father. In respect to his son. And so we've got this.

Delightful irony. That as Caiaphas and his henchmen. Move towards the murder of Jesus. We discover in this. Very same circumstance. Jesus moving towards his father.

Executing. Their plan for salvation. Friends. Sweitzer had it wrong. The death of Jesus.

[19:27] Was not simply. A political strategic tragedy. Which then God. Somehow or other. As they say in modern terms. After you get whipped. At cricket or rugby.

That they get some positives from. It wasn't a tragic accident. That God just managed. To get some positives from. The death of Jesus.

Was driven. By his love. God's love. And planned. By God. For our good. For his glory. And for the glory.

Of the Lord Jesus. Let me say it even more starkly. God himself. Served the death warrant.

On Jesus. His son Jesus. He didn't just predict it. He unleashed it. And Jesus willingly.

[20:22] Moved towards glory. For his father. In every stage of that plan. Right to the point. Of crucifixion. And burial. It is better.

That he die. Jesus always moves. Towards his own death. Another major thing. In Jesus teaching. Is that of sacrifice. And substitution. That Marty's opened up. So well. Already this morning. At the very beginning. Of his ministry. John the Baptist. When he first engaged.

Eyes with Jesus. Said. Behold. The Lamb of God. Who takes away. The sin of the world. The language of sacrifice. The language of mission. And purpose. Shortly after.

Jesus goes into the temple. And he's outraged. At how it had been. Become debased. Into a money making venture. Declares. He declares. He declares. He declares that he will be the new temple.

[21:18] The fulfillment of all that the old temple. Picture. He would be the place. Where people would come to have their sins dealt with. And relationship. And life with God restored. Now.

At the end of his ministry. We see it coinciding with the Jewish Passover feast. Where the blood of the lamb. Was a substitute. Which protected God's people.

From the wrath of God. And delivered them. Into God's holy place. Under his rule. And again.

God uses Caiaphas. To affirm this truth. Of sacrifice. And substitution. And here's how it works. You see. At different levels.

For Caiaphas. In his mind. Fearing the wrath of the Romans. Most. Substitution is. We will kill Jesus. So the Romans won't kill us.

[22 : 21] For Jesus. In his mind. Fearing the wrath of God. Falling on his people. For their sin. The substitution is this. I will offer myself up.

In a sacrificial death. So that God's wrath. Will not kill you. And in the mind of the father. The substitution is. I will kill my son. So that I don't have to kill you. God substitutes Jesus.

For us. For us. His enemies. Do you get it? We can hear the words.

We hear them regularly. It's our bread and butter. As Christians. Isn't it? But do you get it? Jesus moves himself. Towards death. Jesus moves himself.

[23 : 33] Towards death. As the means of moving you and me. To life. And life is acceptance with God.

Abundant relationship with God. Forever. My friends. This reconciling love. Is the heart of the gospel.

It's the heart of the Christian faith. And it's just utterly amazing. And Jesus always moving.

Towards his people. His needy people. Even though they're hardwired. To reject him. Yet another central theme. In Jesus teaching. Is his commitment. To saving his rebellious people.

Who don't even know. They're lost. Repeatedly. Jesus declares. That his works. And his words. His words. Words and associated miracles. Were designed.

[24 : 30] Specifically. To prompt belief. What a mark of God's commitment. To his people. To his sinful people. That he gives. Powerful visual aids. To help us believe.

Jesus words. That's amazing itself. But even more amazing. Jesus also knew. That his people. Left to themselves.

And left to their own choices. Jesus. Could not. And would not. Respond. In faith and belief.

Because sin. Had rendered them blind. God's people.

Jesus knew. Were blind. And lost. And hopeless. Had no way. Of knowing. Which way out. And if. Even if it could work out. Which way out. They had no way. Of achieving that.

Through their own ability. And that's why. I think Jesus. Was so. Openly. And consistently. Opposed.

[25 : 27] To the Jewish. Religious leaders. Because. They were teaching. Quite openly. God's people. They were teaching. God's people. That acceptance. And forgiveness. And relationship. With God. Could be achieved. Simply by.

Being good Jews. And doing. Your share. Of religious rituals. Going to the temple. Offering sacrifice. Saying the prayers. Giving your.

Your. Your tithe. But Jesus. Knew that his people. Would never be accepted. On the basis. Of performance. So he comes.

Into this world. And passionately. Offers them grace. Over. And over. And over. And over again. And grace is.

Being saved. By his efforts. On our behalf. Substitution. He can get it right. When we don't have a ghost.

[26 : 22] Of a chance. Of getting it right. And even more than that. Even more amazing than that. As was modeled. In moving Lazarus.

From death to light. Jesus actually. Intervenes. In the lives. Of his dead people. And makes them alive. To truth and righteousness. Why? Because nothing less.

Than God. Than Jesus intervention. In our lives. By his spirit. Will guarantee. God's salvation plan. Will be successful. And that God. Will be glorified. So Jesus.

Can't leave it to chance. As it were. Can't. Give us any responsibility. For our own salvation.

Because we could stuff it up. And most likely will. Or almost certainly will. So God.

Jesus actually intervenes. And makes his alive. So that the plan. Of the father. Might be seen by all. And the father himself.

[27 : 19] Might be glorified. And again. In these verses. God calls. Caiphas. To affirm.

That Jesus. Is the good shepherd. So that back. In chapter 10. Jesus spoke about. Being the good shepherd. Who would seek out. His lost sheep. From all different folds. Yes.

There'd be some Jews. Would believe. But there'd be people. From all around the world. And this is what. Caiphas affirms. That Jesus. Would seek out. His lost sheep.

And bring them. Safely home. To enjoy abundant life. Where before. His intervention. They were just. Aimless. And lost. And hopeless. So my friend.

We pause the story. We'll continue it. In a few weeks time. But we pause the story. For a few moments. Because it's appropriate. That you also. Consider your response. To Jesus. And so your choices.

[28 : 18] Are a bit limited. Really. I suppose. In some senses. At least I think. They're limited. But. Here's the first option. It could be something. Like this. Will the stench.

And decay. As we consider. The death of Lazarus. And consider. Our own impending death. Will the stench. And decay. Of death. Drive us. To Jesus.

For life. The fragrance. Of life. Life. And security. Not only. In this world. But in all eternity. Or. Like some. In this passage. Will Jesus. Be such a stench. In your nostrils. That you will. Turn away from him. Through fear. Through fear.

Of losing. Your own personal. Sovereignty. But I'd say to you. As you consider. That choice. You will lose.

[29 : 16] Your own personal. Sovereignty. One day. It's called death. Then what? Will you believe.

King Jesus. Recognizing. That his grace. In salvation. Is precisely. What you need. And is what he. Offers you. Right now. Right.

Here. This morning. Or. Will you try. And walk. A middle line. Responding.

Responding. To a Jesus. As you fashion. According. To your own. Convenience. So you take. The bits of Jesus. You like. And just add them.

To your existing. Religious lifestyle. So you can have Jesus. And maintain. Your own. Personal sovereignty. But never really. Come under.

[30 : 12] The lordship. And the kingship. Of Jesus. It's yours. To consider. Let me pray. Lord.

Your word. Has. You've caused it. To be written. At such depth. And with so many layers. We pray. That our response. To your word. Might be. Equally deep.

And equally nuanced. Help us lord. Not simply. To say. We believe. In Jesus. Help us. To. Examine.

Precisely. The Jesus. We believe in. Lest. We be found. To have a substitute. Or counterfeit. Jesus. Which is not real. At all. Help us lord. To bring our lives.

To give up. Our own sovereignty. And bring our lives. Under your sovereignty. In Jesus name. I pray. Amen. Thank you. Thank you for listening.

[31 : 14] We feel. Thank you for listening. Thank you for listening. Thank you for listening. Thank you for listening.

Thank you. Thanks for listening. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for listening. Thank you for listening. Thank you for listening. Thank you. Thank you for listening.