

Lessons from the First Disciples

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[0 : 00] I'm asking this, how many of you realize that we actually just sang a prayer?! Let me follow that up with another question.! How many of you have an idea of who will answer our prayer?

! Now, I'm asking a theological question in reference to the triune God. Do you follow that? I mean, in general, it's a little bit like Sunday school.

You could say God, and you could strike it right. I'd have to give you points for that. But more specifically, who of the triune Godhead is responsible for answering that particular prayer?

Help me out here. The Holy Spirit. That's right. Holy Spirit. And by the way, if the Lord tarries and I live long enough and you're here long enough, we will eventually get to John chapter 14, 15, and 16, and we are going to find the most extensive instruction on the ministry of the Holy Spirit there. That's just going to be, it's going to be wonderful. It's going to be as good as Ephesians. Maybe even better because it's next. You know how I am about books, right?

[1 : 21] The one I'm preaching in at the moment has got to be the best book there is. And I suppose that comes from the process of praying and studying through the week.

And so often as I am coming to the conclusion of that process. And for some of you, you may know that generally on Thursday I have the text written, finished, the text part.

And Connie then puts together the things that go on the overhead. And then from Thursday till Sunday about this time is a time that is bathed in prayer. You know, I want the help of the Holy Spirit to preach the Word.

And I rely on your prayers as well. And one of the things is that when I finish up Thursday, I am just full. I mean, it's like I am ready. If I could preach Thursday afternoon, it would probably be best for me.

Because I carry around this, oh, man, I want to bring it. But, you know, it's like, oh, okay. This is Friday. And Judith, my bride of 44 years, has advised me on many occasions that I'm not allowed to preach to her ahead of time.

[2 : 29] And I said, I was talking with another brother in the Lord. And he was talking to me about what he does as he preaches his sermon to his wife several times in advance.

I said, God bless you. I wish. So you get to hear it hot the first time. Here it is. I want you, as we kind of get our hearts into this passage, to put your finger, first of all, on John 1, verse 35.

That's where we're going to be. We're going to take time together going over all of this passage from 35 to 52. But in order to kind of have the global view, because it helps us keep things together, I want to remind you why John wrote the book.

How many of you know why John wrote the book? It tells us over in John chapter 20, it says, in essence, that these things are written, the pieces that have been put together are written, so that you might know who Jesus is, that he is the Son of God, and that knowing you can believe in him. And so here we are, as we kind of get into the process of understanding this book, we remind ourselves, for one, that John wrote this to inform us of the truth that Jesus is the Son of God, and that knowing this, we can believe on him and have eternal life.

[3 : 49] Well, let me do something here that is not going to give you an excuse to leave the service early, but I do want you to kind of have some abbreviated ideas of what the book is about.

So someone comes up to you and says, the book by Dostoevsky on war and peace, what's it about? Do you know what you could actually say? It's about war and peace.

Now, that's a gross abbreviation of a book about 800 pages. So when we get to the book of John, we want to understand, what's this book about? I've got to tell you, it's about worship and witness. Worship and witness. Think about that. Worship and witness. The two pieces go together. Another way of putting it would be edification and evangelism.

Now, there's a similarity, isn't it? Worship, witness, edification, evangelism. And as we look this morning at this extended passage, we are going to see how these pieces actually come together. [4 : 48] And so I would put it this way. When the heart of the believer is caught up with the glory and the supremacy of Christ, they don't have to be coached.

They don't have to be coerced. They don't have to be manipulated. They talk about what's inside, and they talk about the Lord Jesus Christ. And so I want you to have that fixed in your mind and kind of lock in on that because what we're going to find in this extended passage is, first of all, we're going to find that seeing Jesus clearly shrinks and satisfies.

Shrinks and satisfies. Second thing we're going to see is that seeing Jesus clearly leads to sharing. It just follows as the night, the day. The two go together.

So let's talk, first of all, about seeing Jesus clearly shrinks and satisfies. You pick up there in verse 35, and the next day, again, John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by, and he said, Behold, the Lamb of God.

I know that an entire week has passed since the last time we looked at the, in fact, two weeks since we looked at John 1, verse 19 through 28. But what we saw when we, three weeks now, I guess, but when we looked at that passage, one of the things we saw is that, for one, we're all witnesses.

[6 : 15] Do you understand that? We're all witnesses. Now, some of us may choose to be bad witnesses. I'll never forget. At one point, I was on the phone with an individual dealing with a problem that I was having with insurance.

Anybody ever here have problems with insurance? I mean, you know, it was just a little thing, you know, like, and I'd been on the phone. I mean, I have a record in the computer of how many times I'd called this person, and, you know, I was like, How many of you like listening to music ad nauseum?

Oh, they're playing my song, you know. And so I remember when I finally got to a human voice being a little snarky, you know, I was like, I wanted to let them know that I was a little disappointed with the service I was getting, and my pastor's shepherd's heart was really kind of right there with it, and I kind of went off on a tear.

And this woman, unusually, I don't think she was being recorded, she stopped me and says, You got an attitude. Me? Attitude?

And I had to say, I am ashamed, and thank you for correcting me. I want you to know that the guy you're talking to is a pastor.

[7 : 33] And I have never met you, but I ought to know better. And I have every reason not to be this way, and I ask you to forgive me. Hmm? You see, we're going to be good witnesses sometimes, and we're going to be bad witnesses, but let's face the fact we're all witnesses.

And furthermore, one of the things that we do see as we look at that passage in John chapter 1 is that a biblical witness is not self-focused. And that's what I mean when I speak about shrinking. You know, if you look at the passage, you'll find here that John the Baptist was very, very clear about who he was. And we're going to see that in three different instances as we work our way through this passage.

First, let's recognize that John the Baptist, a man who God sent to be his chosen forerunner, one of a kind, the only one, sent by God directly in front of Jesus.

And as we work our way through the testimony of John the Baptist, the thing we're going to find is that here was a man who had no self-focus or ambition.

[8 : 51] His humility, I want you to understand, was not something that was put on. How many of you know what I mean by kind of put on humility? Oh, that was a wonderful special. Oh, no, it was nothing.

You know, I mean, it's like, yeah, right. I mean, you just can't wait for me to say another sentence. You know, you're right. I guess when I stop and think about it again, that was a real dud. I hope you don't sing that again.

You know, that kind of thing. You know, we find that John was just, his heart was humble. And we read later on in the text as we work our way through the book of John that there came a time when John the Baptist's disciples began following, guess who?

That guy that he baptized. And remember, his disciples are kind of worried about this, and they come to John, and they say, hey, John, I don't know if you're paying attention, but the crowd is dwindling.

And on that basis, what John says, he says, he must increase and I must decrease. Now, listen to me. John speaks in the Greek in an imperative.

[9 : 58] Do you know what imperative is? It has to happen. How many of you understand that gravity is an imperative? I mean, if I stepped off from here, whether I had all kinds of faith about my ability to walk on air, guess what would happen?

It's about 14, 16 inches. Gravity is an imperative. It would take over and do its job. And so here is John the Baptist saying, it's an absolute fact that he must increase and I must decrease. It has to happen. John understood that. And he saw the work of God in that fact and he was satisfied with it.

And so as you look at this passage, here's one of the things I want you to understand. You can't make much of Jesus and yourself at the same time. And so here we see John's lack of self-focus. There in verse 35, the next day again, John was standing with two of his disciples, you know, kind of the buds just talking together and along comes Jesus, just walking by.

[11 : 14] There's no indication that Jesus said, hey, John, thanks for baptizing me. Man, that was awesome. And by the way, John, do you remember when the Holy Spirit came down on me and let you know who I am?

You know, it was like, John just, there he is, saw Jesus. And out of his heart, because of his understanding of who Jesus was and is, he said this, behold the Lamb of God.

Just a profoundly significant theological statement about the fact that God sent his son to be the savior of the world and that his ministry of saving us from sin meant that he had to die in my place and your place.

And as a result of that, throughout all eternity, when we get to heaven and we enjoy eternal bliss, we will remember Jesus as the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world.

I want you to imagine just for a moment, though, that here is John and he says, behold the Lamb of God. And the next thing we find there, he looked at Jesus at verse 36, he looked at, behold the Lamb, and then verse 37, the disciples, the two disciples heard him say this and what did they do?

[12 : 41] They followed Jesus. We know that numbers are important, aren't they? how many employees do you have? How much did that cost?

How many come to the church? How many watched the game? Truth of the matter is, as I was thinking about this, when I happened, I didn't watch the game, I just kind of googled what the score was and one of the things I actually paid attention to was how big was the crowd at the Maryland OSU game?

It was something like 52,000, I thought, peanuts. I mean, small stuff. When we have a game here, we have 108,000.

Am I right, Joe? Gary? Give or take, you know, who's counting? We're about numbers. And so, we don't know what John was thinking when he saw these two disciples that he cared about walking off.

But if our carnal spirits were involved in any of the thinking that he may have had, guess what he was thinking? Man, I poured my heart into these two guys. They've been following me and there they go.

[14 : 05] We've been there. Someone sings a special. Or someone teaches a lesson. Or someone shares a victory.

And as soon as the conversation plays out, we find ourselves thinking, hey, I sang that song before. Don't you remember the lesson I taught two weeks ago?

How many of you understand what I'm talking about? That wicked, perverse, I mean, you know, it's like, where did that thought come from? Hell, you know, and our own wicked heart. But you know, here is John.

And he exclaims ecstatically, with emotion and affection, behold, look, it's the Lamb. And as a result of his clear testimony, he has two that follow.

you look at the passage, and it says, they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, what are you seeking? What's up?

[15 : 15] By the way, how many of you realize that questions are one of the ways to really find out what's in people's hearts? Okay? Questions are supremely important.

And so, here are the two disciples. Hey, what's up? What are you thinking? And I love the fact that they invite themselves to Jesus' home. Now, that's an indication to me that they really wanted

something from Jesus.

This wasn't just a passing fancy. Their heart had been convicted by the Spirit of God that Jesus is the one they needed. Remember later in John chapter 6 where Jesus preaches that thunder and brimstone kind of sermon where at the beginning he has a big crowd and when it's all gone, who's left?

Does anybody remember? Just the disciples. And Jesus turns to them and says, are you guys packing up and leaving too? And what did Peter say? Who remembers? Where are we going? You got the words. You're the one. Evidently, these two disciples were persuaded of the supremacy of Christ and they said, no, we want to spend time with you.

[16:32] And he said, come, come on, come with me. And as you look at this passage, there are a couple things that I want you to mark. For one, in verse 37 it says, they followed him.

We're going to get back to that. I want you to put your finger on verse 40 because I want to tell you that I've already started preparing the message for this. Verse 40. We're a long way, Lord willing, we're a long way from John chapter 13.

But in verse 40 it says, one of the two. Now, does anybody know offhand who one is? This is important. It's actually the apostle John.

And in the gospel that he wrote, he never names himself. He only refers to himself, I think, three or four times by this title.

One whom Jesus loved. Now, would the Holy Spirit endorse someone being arrogant and proud about the fact that they had been loved by Christ?

[17:49] And what is the answer from reasonable Christians? The answer is, not in your life. Now, could John have said something ungodly? That's true. But we'd have somewhere kind of rebuttal in relationship to that.

We're going to come to this issue of what John meant when he said, one whom Jesus loved. But I want you to recognize that as we work our way through the text now, one of the things that I want you to see here is that a clear view of Jesus changes life's directions.

It changes life's directions. We are going to see in this passage, verse 35 on, we're going to see for one thing that as these two disciples heard John speak definitively, I mean, clearly, convictingly, this is the Lamb of God.

This is the Messiah. This is the Savior of the world. What happened is that they changed their direction.

We read that Philip left whatever he was doing to follow. And I want you to recognize that it wasn't because of coercion or pressure. It wasn't because there was a certain benefit package that came with following Jesus in the immediate present, better health insurance, you know, that kind of thing.

[19:06] I want you to understand when you really get down to it that apart from John the Apostle, who they believe died as an exile, every, except for Judas, every other disciple was executed for their faith.

It was their view of Christ that led to a change of direction. So as you sit out here, one of the questions to ask yourself practically is, is your life's direction different because you've seen Jesus clearly.

Now stop just for a minute. When we think about life's direction, we have a tendency of getting caught up in the mundane and the things that have no eternal significance.

Let me explain what I mean by that. I mean tomorrow morning, given time, whatever, most of you here are going to either go to school or go to work. Right? That's not your life's real direction.

That's just how God has employed you to have a spiritual and lasting impact in the lives of other people who desperately need Christ. I want you to understand something else as we look at the passage in broad terms.

[20:20] A clear view of Jesus changes life's purpose. That's part of what I'm reflecting on here. Some went from being fishermen to being fishers of men.

One went from being a doctor to being a disciple. Another went from being a tax collector to a disciple.

Ask any person that has been swept away by the gospel about what their life is all about. Let me say that again slowly because I think we have to understand this.

Ask any person whose life has been swept away by the beauty of the gospel, what's your life about? Here's what they won't say.

It's about my retirement. It's about my motor home. It's about how much my investments are making so I can be a pretty self-indulgent fool.

[21 : 31] Tell a story on myself. Three, four years ago, well, that's two years ago actually, that I began thinking to myself, when I retire, I think I'm going to get a small plot of land, about ten acres, and I'm going to raise chickens and cows.

house. This is true. In fact, my bride even entertained me so much, hi Judith, that we began driving around looking at properties.

I remember actually thinking to myself, you know what? If you have those ten acres or twelve acres or whatever, the next thing you have to have is a mower.

And then, this is just Tim kind of speculating in his mind and he thought, you know what? If you're going to keep it mowed so you can kind of sit there and look at it and like short grass, you know, you're going to spend four, five, maybe six hours mowing the sucker every week when it rains, you know, and then, you know something about cows and chickens and goats?

You have to feed them. I remember actually doing the math and I was convicted. I was convicted.

[22 : 53] God rescued me from being a miserable, despicable sinner to spend the rest of my life pointing to Jesus, not at the back end of chickens and cows.

And when you talk to people who have been swept away by the glory of Christ, you hear about it. So, as you look at this radical change here, we find in John the Baptist for one, and then we find in the two disciples there in verse 37 and again in verse 40, one of the things that we understand is that these individuals were willing to lay it all aside so that they could have a sweeter and more significant relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Does that mark your life? Think with me just for a moment of a companion passage in relationship to this and turn over in your Bible to Philippians chapter 3 verse 7 through 9.

Let me kind of start earlier in verse 4. Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also, if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

Verse 5. I was making \$500,000 a year as a speaker on a tour and I had property in Florida and I also had property just not in the passage but just understand the passage.

[24 : 38] Here is John the, is Paul saying, I had it all. property in the Rockies, property in the Smoky Mountains, vacation home in Florida, you know, and I had it all.

Everybody thought I was the real thing and then, guess what? Verse 8. Indeed, I count everything as lost because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

all that has become junk in my thinking in comparison to the glory and the satisfaction of knowing Christ.

Where is that in your thinking? He says, I count it all rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having mine own righteousness that comes from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ the righteousness from God that depends on Christ.

Let's see something second. Seeing Jesus clearly leads to sharing. We should know by now that John the Baptist saw Jesus clearly and we understand that the reason he saw him clearly was because of the work of the Holy Spirit.

[26 : 13] How many of you recognize that? Remember what John said? I had no idea who he was going to be except for the fact that I had been told by divine utterance that the one that the Holy Spirit came down and stayed on that's the Messiah.

And then he met Jesus and saw that happen. That's him. That's him. And so here is John the Baptist who had a clear picture of Jesus and as a result the thing that we find about John working our way through the passage is that his joy and his satisfaction was in pointing others to Christ. And some saw Jesus through John's testimony and were affected. How do we know that? Well what we find here in the passage as we allude to verse 37 and then again to 40 was that what happened is as a result of the testimony of John the Baptist there were two that were drawn off to become the disciples of Christ.

And so I want you to recognize that seeing Jesus clearly by the work of the Spirit of God ends up calling individuals away from where they are and their goals and ambitions of life and changing them dramatically to make them focused on the Lord Jesus and following that you end up with a sequence that we shouldn't miss.

Look at the passage again. It says there in verse 40 one of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew Simon Peter's brother.

[27 : 58] He first found when did he do it? When did he find his brother? Immediately. We find the same thing play out if you will in verse 43 and 45 kind of skip ahead a little bit.

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee he found Philip and said to him follow me and Philip was from Bethsaida the city of Andrew and Peter Philip found Nathanael what really prompts gospel witnessing?

I want to say this carefully. What really prompts gospel witnessing? I want to say it this way an abiding joy in forgiven sin and a personal relationship with Christ.

That's what does it. Secondly I would add this a desire to share what's supremely satisfying as I was driving to church this morning.

I was thinking about my back surgery some 15 20 years ago. I forget when it was but I remember being gurnied into surgery with numbness down my leg and constant pain and after I woke up and all those other things were out of my body I remember kind of moving my leg to find out so how's the pain?

[29 : 19] It wasn't there. I became a lifetime debtor to Dr. Bay. Anybody that comes to me and says I'm having back pain go see Dr.

Bay. It's just natural. You follow that? The stunning truth about the history of gospel witnessing around the world is that the vast majority of people that have been drawn to Christ have had no professional training no preparation other than being recipients of the grace of God in their lives. I want you to look at a couple things in relationships. I've got to prove my point with the Bible. Would you agree with that? Let's go to Acts chapter 8 verse 1. Keep your finger because we're coming back to John but Acts chapter 8 verse 1.

And Saul approved of his execution and there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles.

The professionals stayed home. Who went everywhere else? Just the common disciples. The people whose lives had been radically changed by the ministry of the gospel and knew the complete forgiveness for all sins through the finished work of the Lord Jesus.

[31 : 05] And you know what? They couldn't help but talk about what was good in their lives. I want you to see the way this all played out. We kind of cut ahead to Acts chapter 17 verse 6.

Here's Paul. Paul and Silas actually in Thessalonica I believe it is. And people end up being pretty upset by having these preachers here in town.

But a very interesting little statement is made in verse 6. And what they could not find, Paul and Silas, they'd been hidden by other believers, they cry out to the city authorities and say, listen, these men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.

Stop and think for me just for a minute. Do you think it was just Paul and Silas really that were used by God to turn the world upside down? Not in your life. We know of names like D.L.

Moody. Most of us don't know that Kincaid was the guy who actually witnessed to a young shoe salesman and sharing the gospel led to a transformed life.

[32 : 27] We know Billy Graham, but the vast majority of people who have really been transformed by the gospel and are transforming the lives of others with the testimony of Christ are unnamed.

So let me ask you a question. How is your witness? Is that a fair question? How is your witness? If I were to honestly ask other people at work, and we're talking about work, politics?

What are the things that you are passionate about and that you have complete confidence in? Oh, politics. There's a Greek word for it.

It's called meganoito. No more of that. It's like, I am convinced that God does not wear a label that says vote for me, Republican or Democrat.

that. Here's another thing. God is not that primarily concerned that his children become evangelists for the things they're selling, or evangelists for their child's t-ball team, or whatever else.

[33 : 49] The thing that I should be known of, listen, the thing that I should be known for, particularly in the unbelieving circles that I end up on occasion around, is that I am, first of all, a testimony by my behavior to the grace of Christ.

And secondly, that when God gives me an opportunity, I'm excited to talk about the one who forgave all my sins. Is that where it's at with you?

So, first question I would ask in relationship to this business of how you're witness is that, well, do you really know him?

I mean, I'm convinced one of the things that happens is people grow up in a church, they learn the vocabulary of the church, they could even be baptized. I have baptized more people more than once than I care to think about.

how many of you caught that? Nothing wrong with baptism, but I want you to understand that baptism doesn't save you. Baptism is an outward sign of what God's done in your heart and salvation.

[35 : 00] So, I want you to understand if you're sitting here and you, I have never witnessed other than about my kids, you know, whatever, or my dog or whatever, okay, if it's not in your heart, you may not be a person who has enjoyed the blessing of complete forgiveness.

You're not a repentant individual who's been drawn to realize the abiding grace of God in salvation. And, you know, the woman at the well, no coaching, off she went to town.

The demoniac just needed a little push, remember that? He said, Jesus, I don't want to go back to town. Everybody remembers what a skunk I was. He said, go back and show them. You're changed. The truth of the matter is that some of you don't know Christ, and that's the reason for the lack of affection and passion.

Number two, there are some of you here that have lost your first love. How many of you know that love needs to be nurtured? It just doesn't kind of stay there? Some of you have had the enemy of your soul trap you with a secret sin, and you're bound up with bitterness and sullenness.

Can I tell you something? You can't have a bad attitude and be a good witness. Can everybody smile at that one? That can't be applied to anybody here that I know, but you can't say it so we understand it.

[36 : 27] You can't be a person with a bad attitude and be a good witness. And all God's people said, well, that wasn't bad. Okay. I want to say this.

Believers who are not passionate about the Lamb have something that is hindering their joy and their witness.

And so when that is the fact, you who know Christ can do one of two things in the face of the Spirit's work this morning which is tapping on your shoulder and saying, this needs to be changed.

Two choices. You can go ahead and just tempt God with your stubborn spirit. Anybody ever tried that before besides me? You don't mean to say bring it on, but when you say no to God, when He is speaking to you about having a contrite spirit in the face of the convicting work of the Spirit, and you just say yeah, He just says, I'm there, and He'll help you.

Or, and here's what Tim Kenoyer has to do on a periodic basis, because me and attitudes are something God has to help me with. You understand that? I'm an attitude inventor.

[38 : 00] I just pop. Where did that come from? You can confess the need that you have in your lack of awe and love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can go ahead and say it. By the way, does He not know this? No, He knows. But He likes for you to have the humility to say, I don't feel anything. I don't have any affections for you.

And it's not your problem, but I need your help. Now, which of the two is more intelligent? Help me here.

One or two? One of the things I read in a book by, forget the name, John Krodz. He said, being foolish is a career choice.

There are some of you in this service this morning that are consciously and deliberately saying no to God about the shallowness of your affection and the lack of joy in the Holy Spirit and the complete absence of just that natural bubbling of saying, come and see, the one who has forgiven all of my sins.

[39 : 28] And I would plead with you this morning. Do not tempt the Lord. Humble yourself because as Charles Spurgeon rightly says, we have two choices, either humble ourself or let Him humble us.

being foolish is a career choice. Let's pray. Father, this morning as our hearts consider the text and we see what you did in John the Baptist's life and we see what you did in the lives of these men that you called to become disciples, we don't want to waste our lives in pettiness and smallness.

We want to have the humility to confess the hardness of our heart. and we know our thinking is wrong and we need the Spirit to make a difference. We don't want to be foolish and thumb our nose at the Holy One of Israel.

And so it is my prayer that this morning your Spirit would get a hold of the hearts of all of your people. that our view of Christ would be the thing that dominates, brings about transformation to the glory of our Savior.
And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.