

John 20:30-31

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[0:00] It's important that we understand what we are to believe about Jesus. Is it enough to believe that he existed? John would say, that's not sufficient.

Is it enough to believe that he was a good teacher? John 20, 30 and 31 would say, that's not sufficient. Is it enough to believe, as Muslims believe, that he was a prophet?

No. The scriptures are clear about what we must believe about Christ. John says, these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

We just finished a book, a sermon series in the Book of Micah. Micah talks about the Christ. We, along with Israel, have been expecting a Messiah, the Christ.

They were waiting for, as Micah put it, a shepherd king, born in Bethlehem, who would open up a breach of the captivity of his people and lead them out, and cleanse the people of their idolatry, and draw the nations to himself.

[1:29] That's who Micah was expecting in the Christ, the Messiah. And in fact, John is going to quote Micah to prove that Jesus' public ministry fulfills the office of the cross, the Messiah.

When Jesus cleanses the temple, John is going to quote Micah, not Micah, thank you, sorry. Micah chapter 3. John says, We're going to see, to believe, that Jesus of Nazareth is the figure that Micah was projecting for us.

This figure, he is this figure. He fills that role, but also another role from the Book of Micah. Micah, we're going to see that Jesus forgives sins.

Sometimes, in conversation, he's going to say our sins are forgiven. And also, we're going to see him go to the cross, where he bears the curse for his people's sin on their behalf, to forgive all our sins.

Who forgives sins? I've already mentioned the conclusion of the Book of Micah, where Micah asks, In the very end of chapter 7, Who is a God like you?

[2:58] Pardoning the equity, and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance. He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.

He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities under foot. And John will essentially be saying, He treads our iniquities under nails to our feet.

He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. He will show faithfulness to Jacob, and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old. And John wants us to see. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. And Jesus is the Lord, as he puts it in the Son of God. Next Sunday, we're going to begin in chapter 1, where most people will know they start the sermon series.

John is going to take us back to the very beginning. And he's going to talk about Jesus' essence in the beginning, was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[4:04] And throughout the gospel, we're going to see Jesus react with God the Father. There's actually going to be a conversation between heaven and earth for our benefit.

Where the Father and the Son speak to each other. And some of his miraculous signs, they're going to signal that he's not just a great prophet and miracle worker like the prophets of old.

That he is something else entirely. And that's why John records for us the famous, I am statements. I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world.

Before Abraham was, I am. I am the light of the world. And on and on. The Lord cares what you think about who he is.

What do you think of Jesus? And while you pondered that, I'd like to ask another question.

[5:12] Because in this summary statement, John chapter 20, verses 30 and 31, there is another of John's major themes standing here.

I wonder if you caught it when we read through it. Life. I'm not going to go back through like I did with the belief thing and read from every chapter one after another after another.

But life comes up everywhere in the book of John. He's very concerned with this idea. And so are we.

This is everyone you've ever met. We all seek life somehow. Today perhaps we like to call it human flourishing.

I said that weird. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to like. It's just a term. You can use whatever phrase you like. I don't mean to be dismissive of it. We all do it.

[6:15] Everyone seeks life. In some way. And the life, what kind of life we seek, determines where and how we look for it.

What life are you looking for? And where are you looking for it? And how are you trying to get it? Because we all are looking for life. A better life. A freer life. A fulfilled life. A less lonely life.

A richer life. However we define that. A well rounded life. The good life. However, we look for it. A better life.

Everything that you and I do is directed at that end. All of it. Towards that better life. Or towards at least what we think will be a better life.

[7:16] Because we can be mistaken. We can be mistaken first about what constitutes giving up. And we can be mistaken that this will get us that thing we're after. Put it on a crystal ball so we can't see it all.

But we can be mistaken. Everyone is looking for life. The big question is, are we doing it right? Advents are chasing life.

But either their timeline is too short or more likely their hope for the long term is going. To the tag within the dead right now.

Most Americans are chasing the American dream. That's the vision of the good life most of us here have had a place before us. By our society.

By our families probably. There's a whole book of the Bible. We talked about it last week. There's a whole book of the Bible, Ecclesiastes, about how empty that pill is. You can get the American dream.

[8:17] And still be miserable. The lives of so many American celebrities unfolding on the pages of tabloids can attest to that.

Aren't we actually a little bit shocked when we hear about a celebrity with a stable marriage and a contented life? Like isn't that like, oh wow, that's a surprise to us? That should tell us something about the American dream and what it can offer us.

And there are a thousand different definitions of what human flourishing is. What the abundant life looks like.

What the abundant life looks like. Some of those definitions are based heavily on household economics. Right? Financial freedom for ourselves. Which is a good thing. Right? It's not a bad thing. Some of them are based heavily on justice.

Righting many of society's wrongs. Again, a good thing. Some see how fractured our society is. We focus on connection. Another good thing.

[9:19] Others on the environment. The list goes on and on and on. Harvard University has set up a human flourishing program inside their Institute for Quantitative Social Science.

To follow this idea of human flourishing in the fields of sociology, political science, economics, education, psychology, medicine, public health, and other empirical sciences.

All of which have a different definition of what the best life looks like and is. I don't want you to think that I'm dismissive of that. I think that's a great thing. That people are studying how to make the world a better place.

But the multitude of different ideas and definitions and conceptions about what human flourishing is. Or the best life, whatever you want to call it, is. There's no way to come to a consensus on it.

And not every vision of the good life is a good one. Some of them are based on breaking bonds and expanding freedom. Those who launched the sexual revolution in the mid-20th century, a freedom movement, would not recognize or like what their movement has become today.

[10:33] And the problem is not simply out there in the culture. We do the same. You and I. We do the same.

Every time that we make a life choice, career, spouse, home, we're pursuing the good life. Every time that you and that I sin, we're pursuing something we think will make us happy.

What are you striving for? What does that say about the life that you think is simple, is best?

What disappoints you to the point of deep dissatisfaction and sorrow and frustration?

And what does that say about the life towards which your heart is oriented? What does that say about the life that your heart is longing for?

[12:12] We aren't different than those who are outside the doors of the church. We're looking for life too. And that's why the Lord asks His people as we considered last week in Isaiah chapter 55, Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?

And your labor for that which does not serve. And we're just stuck. Right? That's why the Lord asks that question.

That question. In Isaiah chapter 55. And then Christ comes. He comes. I'm getting ahead of myself. Sorry. Hang on. The answer is going to be in Christ. I'm getting ahead of myself. Hang on. The answer is going to be in Christ.

He's going to ask the same question. He's going to give the same answer. In Isaiah, the Lord asked Isaiah 55 verse 2. He said, Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

And the Lord answers Himself. Come everyone who thirsts. Come to the waters. And he who has no money, come buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk. Without money and without price.

[13:21] He wants to give us life. Without price to ourselves. Because we're spending ourselves on things that don't and can't satisfy ever. And Jesus says in John chapter 6.

Do not work for food that perishes. Does that sound similar? But for the food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give to you.

Whose shoes does He fill in there? And then He says, I am the bread of life.

Right? I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. And whoever believes in me shall never thirst. God's answer to His own question on Isaiah 5 is, Come to me for true bread.

True, satisfying life. And Jesus' answer is, Come to me for bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread. I am the bread.

[14:29] I am the bread. This Jesus is God incarnate in the world. He is taking to Himself in human nature so that He might walk among us.

And it is in Him that we can have I. And the life we are going to see in John's Gospel isn't so much about the duration of the life, though it is that.

It is everlasting life that we have in Him. But that is actually a secondary feature. John is concerned with something else about the essence of the life. Yes, it is forever. Because God is forever.

And when He gives us eternal life, well that's just the quality of it. But the life that He offers is a different kind of life altogether.

A new birth. That was already about in John chapter 3. The life He offers is being connected to the life giver Himself.

[15:33] John chapter 15, He says, I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in Him, He it is that bears much fruit.

It is a vital connection to the Lord Himself. The life He offers. Well, right, when we think eternal life, we think about duration, right?

In John chapter 17, Jesus is praying to the Father before He goes to the cross. Here's how He defines eternal life. And note, it has nothing to do with timing or duration.

John 17, 3. He says to the Father, and this is eternal life. That they know you. The only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have saved.

No matter who you are, this is what you are looking for. Because everyone is looking for life.

[16:42] And here is where it may be found. All of it else is bread that doesn't satisfy. No matter what you think you're after, it's this.

Because everyone wants what is best and what lasts and what is highest. And John wants you to find it. That's what he's saying in John chapter 20.

I am writing this so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have this life in His name.

If John is, or I'm sorry, if Jesus is who John presents Him to be, if Jesus is who He claims to be, if what He offers is real, no other version or vision of human flourishing comes close.

I am the vine, you are the branches. I flow my life into you. No other version offers you the source of life Himself.

[17:52] It offers you stuff or status. No other version offers you resurrection. The best you can offer is carpe diem, or you only live YOLO, you only live once, right?

That's like the very, how short and sad is that? Compared to I am the resurrection and the life. No other version offers you a connection to the life as close as the vine and the branches.

No other version offers you forever. No other version of human flourishing was already bought for you by another.

Where is life found? John Locates is answered to that in an identity, but not in me figuring out my identity.

But in figuring out who this Jesus is, you find that life is located there. A Giver offered to me free you.

[18:59] He is Savior, the Christ, and Lord, the Son of God. And in Him is life for all who would, Paul, I am here.

And so, I say, all who are seeking life, will you lay a bowl of pride? Will you lay a bowl of pride? Will you lay a bowl of pride? If you've never seen Him, Lord, who He is, until this moment, when the Lord is working in the heart, will you run to Him as your Savior, the Christ, and as your Lord, the Son of God?

Will you find in Him life forevermore at the cost that He has already paid for you at His cross? Will you do it? And friends, for everyone, those who have trusted in Christ as well, right, that is what constitutes eternal life, that's holding on to Him, finding in Him our joy and our sustenance.

That's what life is. And so, this is for us who have believed on Christ as well. Looking to Him as the vine, and ourselves as the branches, and finding that knowing the true God, Jesus Christ, whom He has sent, is the substance of our lives, is the source of our flourishing.

And so, friends, let us, as we approach the book of John, let us be looking. Let us be attentive to what John's aims are, the Lord, the Lord's aims, as He led John to write this book.

[20:44] Let us be looking to see who it is this Jesus is. Let us be looking to see who it is, and we are going to see who it is, and we are going to see who it is, and we are going to see who it is.

Let us look for Jesus. Let us look for a trustworthy Jesus. Let us look for a trustworthy Jesus.

Because believing in Him is the entrance into life. and let's learn to know Jesus because that is the very substance of life because in him is light and that light is the life let's pray