

Selected Verses from John 1-17 “Previously...in the book of John”

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Good morning. Hope you guys have had a wonderful weekend. I am excited to be able to be a part of leading today as we look at God's Word together.

For those of you who haven't been with us the past weeks or so, months actually, we've been going through the book of John. And we finish in chapter 17 this past week and we're going to take a break, except for today.

But we're going to move into the Advent season after this week. So today, you ever watch a TV show and, you know, they do the recap at the beginning and they say, previously on whatever, right?

Today is previously in the book of John. And what I would like to do today is encourage you in three specific ways. So I've looked at chapters 1 through 17 and taken three sort of big overarching things away that I think are important for all of us to hear.

[1 : 18] So I want to start with a story, though. Beckett Davis Jr., okay? That is a name that may mean nothing to you, but he lives in infamy.

That name lives in infamy in my family. Why? Because of Justin Bieber, okay? Justin Bieber was coming to town in Nashville.

And you may not know this, but my wife, she's a Belieber. So she loves Justin Bieber songs. And her mother took her to a concert, her first concert.

When she was young, they got to experience that together. I think it was the New Kids on the Block. Is that right? Mine was the Rolling Stones. So she wanted to take our son to the first concert.

So naturally, you go to the concert that mom chooses, right? So what do you do if you're in Huntsville and you want to go see a Justin Bieber concert? You have to go to Facebook or Craigslist and all the things.

[2 : 21] So we go to Craigslist. And she's got, you know, a potential seat. And we, you know, we get the message back from Beckett Davis Jr.

And he says something like, here's why I can't go to the concert. My thought is, though, that we need to use Western Union and I can FedEx the passes for you.

I suggest we start by speaking on the phone, though, so that we can know that both of us is real and legit. I hope you're okay with that. So the story goes, you send money to Western Union.

And he sends you a picture of, you know, the FedEx stuff and, or not FedEx, whatever, the envelope is from Western Union. And all of the things are good.

Until you get the message that says this here. Hey, I went there to kind of get the money and, you know, my driver's license is a little torn.

[3 : 19] So they wouldn't let me actually get that out. So you're going to need to call them and waive the ID. Feature. So I can get the money. I'm like, hold up. Right?

And at this point, fortunately, we were able to call Western Union, get the money back. They're like, yeah, this guy's trying to scam you. So I was just mad at Beckett Davis Jr.

I do not like injustices like this. So I'm, I just prayed. And I get an email. The next day. From guess who?

Beckett Davis Sr. And apparently I had in the looking for tickets gone in on another ad.

And now that he's moved on, he's coming back to my ad. What are the chances of that? So I was like, this would be my mission now to ruin this guy's life.

[4 : 17] I want to eat up as much time as possible in his life and do to him what he did to me. So I did. I created an elaborate scam where I sent him all of the information he thought that I was sending.

I had him go to the Western Union at least four or five times. And he became so mad at me that he, because they get agitated when you don't do what they want you to do.

And he became so mad at me, he's like, he just started sending these ugly, ugly emails. And I said, listen, I can't give you the money unless I talk to you. We've got a big problem with Western Union. Big problem over there. So my goal was to get him on the phone. And I finally did. I created a Google number just for this purpose. And here's how the phone call went.

Hey, Beckett. Hey, Beckett. How's it going? Good. I appreciate you calling me. How's it going with you? Not too bad. So they were running into some sort of problem with the zip code and then the piece of your last name being senior.

[5 : 31] Oh. Does that make any sense to you? I said, oh, you're hearing zip code. What was that? Sorry, you're cutting out. What was the first thing you said?

I'm sorry. So Western Union's running into a problem with the zip code being associated with the address and the word senior at the end of your name.

Beckett Davis Senior, S-R. I have no idea about the zip code, but I guess they can just drop the senior from the name. That's fine. Yeah. Well, something about in their system between senior and junior.

They had you in their system as junior. And so that's causing some sort of weird deal. Have you ever sent money through them as junior?

No. Yeah. I mean, I guess it's, well, Davis is a pretty common last name, but I don't know. Yeah. So that seems to be what's going on.

[6 : 31] So I guess to work it out, we just have to, I don't know. We could have you call them or something. Okay. Well, let me try to call them right now.

Yeah. And before you go, though, thanks for your time. I did want to say I really know that God has a better plan for your life than trying to scam people as well, and there really is no money.

And I know you aren't who you say you are. I'm sorry? I know you aren't who you say you are and that you're trying to scam me out of tickets, and God has a better plan for your life than this, brother. So why do I share that story, right? This world is filled with people trying to tell you something that is a lie, and we believe it all the time.

The world is filled with Beckett Davis Jr.'s that we believe. But the first thing in the book of John that you can know and take home is that Jesus is who he said that he is.

[7 : 42] You don't have to fear that. Let's look at a couple of verses of what he said. Because you ever wonder, though, is God really who he said he is? What if I'm wrong?

What if I'm just a little bit off, right? And I want to encourage you, he is. Jesus is who he said he is. Let's look at some verses together here. I don't think this thing's working.

The woman said to him, I know that the Messiah is coming. He who is called the Christ. When he comes, he will tell us all things. And Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he.

The first thing there, right? Jesus told us that he is the Messiah. Jesus said to them, I'm the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. And whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

He's the bread that you need. He is what you're thirsting for in this life. And Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. So they picked up stones to throw at him.

[8 : 46] But Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. Jesus is forever. He's what we're really seeking. He's the Messiah.

He is forever. But what does all that mean? Okay, what does it mean that he's the Messiah? Why should that encourage you now? Because Jesus, as the Messiah, is going to make all sad things untrue.

Jesus is reversing the curse of death. Okay, he's putting it in reverse. Jesus is making all things new. And he's at work in your life right now.

So you don't have to doubt that if you're in Christ. You're secure right where you are. And he didn't just say he's the Messiah. He backed it up.

Remember what miracles happened? He turned water into wine. He healed the royal official's son in the first 17 chapters is what I'm looking at. He healed the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda.

[9 : 51] He fed 5,000 people from a few loaves of bread. Oh, by the way, he walked on water. He healed the man born blind from birth. And he raised Lazarus from the dead.

The miracle of the miracles there that really turned the corner for everybody wanting to get rid of him. Jesus is who he said he is.

He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. Now, I don't know about you. Actually, I do know about you. If you're human, you're walking around every single day in your heart at some point believing that you are a failure in some way.

And the world is full of Beckett Davis Jr.'s to give you permission to say, yeah, I am a failure. You're criticizing your own heart. You're dealing with that by criticizing other people to make yourself temporarily distracted from the criticism that you give to yourself.

Because if you have to sit and admit that you're not good enough, then where do you end up?

Here's the reality. God came to change all that. Okay?

[11 : 01] He gives you an invitation not to critique yourself. But he gives you an invitation to realize that he is enough and he's very well pleased with you all because of his son.

Okay? And that's the life of joy that we're seeking. That the world does not give us. Right? You don't have to judge yourself a failure anymore because Christ, Christ is the one who is the success that you're looking for.

Jesus Christ. So I want to challenge you to reflect on that this week. When you get in that moment where you're wanting to criticize the other person or you're criticizing your own heart or you're looking in the mirror and you're like, I'm not good enough.

Or my friends just da-da-da-da or I don't have this phone. Any litany of reasons why you aren't good enough for the other person. I want you to take a moment to reflect on the truths of Jesus and let him anchor you in the fact that your value comes from who Jesus is, not who you are not.

So this week, if you could find a silent time, sit down and look at Jesus' I am statements in the book of John. And let it speak to you.

[12 : 15] And let it affirm to you who you are in him because you are who he is if you are in him.

And if you don't know Jesus, I want to welcome you to consider the life that you may have been missing out on.

The life that Christ offers. Jesus is who he said he is. The second great truth from the book of John is that Jesus is who he said he is.

Yeah, you can help me out back there. And Jesus is with us right where we are. Jesus is with us right where we are. Why is that important?

Well, I want to share another story first. One time my son, he was really young. He came running in the house and he was upset from the neighborhood. And my wife comes in right behind him and I was like, what is going on?

And he was big time upset. And she's like, these kids were just chasing him down the road in a golf cart. It's these older kids. And I was like, injustice!

[13 : 21] And so I just ran out the door and I was like, I'm going to find these kids. And AC was like, I couldn't find them. So I get on my bike. I track them down to their house at the front door.

And they're just staring at me. And I walk up and I say, did you chase my son down? And they're just going. And one of them is like laughing and snickering. And I go, okay, guys, we can do this the easy way or we can do this the hard way.

Did you chase my son in this neighborhood on this golf cart? And they wouldn't say anything. They go, okay, the hard way it is. So I walked right over to their door, knocked on the front door and parents come out.

Your son was chasing my son. And they go, get in this house now! You're not supposed to be driving! And the kid was like being taken away from the courtroom when he was sentenced to death looking at me like this as he's drugging the house.

And I said, you could have done it the easy way. And then it occurred to me as I was leaving right after that, the whole time I was wearing this shirt.

[14 : 27] How intimidating was that? Of course he was laughing at me. Best dog dad's coming after me. So why do I share that?

You know, we all want somebody to be with us. We want someone to protect us. We want someone with us who's going to fight for us.

Y'all, Jesus is who he said he is, but he's the one who's right with us where we are. Right where we are. Right? And he gives us protection.

He gives us far beyond just that. He's a constant presence. He protects us. He teaches us. He guides us. Look at these scriptures here.

I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you, it said in John. Jesus answered him, if anyone loves me, he'll keep my word and my father will love him and we will come to him and we'll make our home with him.

[15:29] He will live inside you. How? By the Holy Spirit, the helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name. He will teach you all things and he will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

The Holy Spirit is our best friend. The Holy Spirit is our bodyguard. The Holy Spirit is our advocate in the courtroom sense, fighting for us. The Holy Spirit is our counselor, helping us sort out our thoughts and our problems and our misgivings.

The Holy Spirit is our comforter, the one who holds you. The Holy Spirit is your 24-7 best friend, bodyguard, secret service agent that you can call at all times.

And God through the Holy Spirit is always saying to us, it's going to be okay. It's going to be okay. But the life we're seeking and all of these other things, it's really found in the Holy Spirit.

And I want you to consider that as well. So I want to share a story. So I met this guy named John Ferguson.

[16:38] And he's a pastor and I'm a part of a cohort of pastors. And we gathered in D.C. a few weeks ago for its evangelism cohort. And part of it was we had to interview one another.

And it was a question and answer time. And I asked him, do you have a tattoo? He said, no. I said, well, if you did get a tattoo, what would you get?

And little did I know what I had asked. He goes into a story about how his... They wanted to adopt children. And they wanted to adopt children that were siblings, right?

From the same birth family. And so they did. And these children had some medical challenges that hindered them to be in a category where they had a lot of special needs.

Well, when one of their children grew up to be 14 years old, he just said he didn't want to be adopted anymore. And it was really troubling for him.

[17:42] And they ended up going through the process of helping him find another place. And his child ended up getting wayward. And it was one of the hardest situations of his life.

And he's telling me all this from that question, what would your next tattoo be? And he's crying. And he says, and then I got the call I never wanted to hear. He had passed away. And he said, so I was wondering in that moment, is God there?

That night I'm just scrolling endlessly on my phone. I'm wrestling with God. And he's just weeping. And he says, and I came across this picture.

And he says, God, show me. I've got your son. And I've got you. And the cross is where you see it. And he said, that's the tattoo I would get.

See, Jesus is with us right where we are. So that means if you're here and you're in a moment of anxiety or doubt or thinking that nothing's enough or your life is worthless, Jesus is not distancing himself from you.

[19:02] The Holy Spirit, our advocate, our comforter, he walks with us, especially in our lowest moments. So keep crying out. And don't give up.

God is doing something big with you. Jesus is with us right where we are. But I want to ask this question. Do you have time to talk to him?

So in this cohort of pastors I'm in, we recently were on a Zoom call. And we were discussing the topic of monastery.

Okay, monastery is unhurried, unscripted, unfiltered time to just reflect with God. And we've discovered that monastery time is not only essential to the health of people of faith, but it's also exponentially enhanced when it's done in nature or natural settings.

So one of the pastors on the calls was struggling with it because it was summertime and he likes to go out by this river and it was just so hot he just couldn't pray regularly. So Pastor Al, who's an outdoorsman, he said, you realize if you move your chair into the river, it can lower like 10 degrees, the temperature.

[20 : 20] And I want you to think about that for a minute. Where do you put your chair of life? Okay. Because that's what occurred to me when he was saying that.

See, we all have this rhythm of life. You could call it an orbit in this space town. Where you go, what you do, and there's a rhythm to it. And you're putting your chair somewhere each day.

You're parking your car somewhere, right, so to speak. You're in an orbit. The first place that that chair needs to be is as close to the river and even in it of God's grace.

Okay, that's the time where you have to reflect and say, come here, God, with whatever the stuff you're dealing with. Come into my life. Cry out.

Now, you can do this at all moments, but as a human, you need a regular rhythm of that. We've been talking a lot about this in the Connect Hour class as well, about what does it mean to be unhurried.

[21 : 20] But you need a regular rhythm where you can go to God without a script. Okay, that's unhurried. And let him into those moments. Because he's with you right where you are, but sometimes we're so busy we forget and we miss it.

We don't have time to know where he is. And then we say, well, I don't experience God. And sometimes that's because we don't even have time to. And I just want to encourage you as a human with a soul, make that time to plug in your charger.

And see what happens. See what happens. Where you put your chair. Put it as close to God as you can. And see, silence and solitude, they're not about escaping, but they're about meeting Jesus in our anxiety.

Allowing him to speak truth and comfort over us right where we are. And creating that rhythm of connecting with Jesus is so important. Okay? So being a Christian actually requires that we change our schedule sometimes.

And we say no to certain things and yes to other things. But I'll tell you this. The time with Jesus is so valuable for your soul. It's so valuable.

[22 : 37] And if you're longing for that, this is a team of people to help you do it. Because we need each other in that. And it's worth making the sacrifice for. So I just want to encourage you in that. Jesus is with you right where you are.

But do you have that time to say, hey, will you come be with me right where I am? Let's talk about it. Let's have this moment here. He is who he said he is. He's with us right where we are.

And also Jesus is carrying us, third truth, where we are meant to be. Carrying us to where we are meant to be.

It was said earlier in this John series, I think Bill Nash was preaching that week, that all of life is uphill. Have you ever thought of yourself, though, as an explorer on a journey, on an adventure? Or an anthropologist seeking stuff out, learning, looking at the rocks? We went on fall break, I have some pictures, to Colorado.

[23 : 41] And it was so beautiful. And we went on this hike. And we were supposed to go on the gondola up.

But because one of our friends with us, they had a dog, you can only take the gondola down with a dog. You can't go up with a dog. Because that, right, you see how that works?

So, but that day, that was the rule. So, we had to hike three miles straight uphill to ride the gondola down. And it was a tough hike.

But when we got to the top, it was so beautiful. That all of that other stuff, all of that struggle, just kind of went away.

And it was just like, and you could even, when I was looking out at the mountain up there, I just felt like it was an appetizer for something greater. Like, I was longing for something bigger and felt, just felt, it felt cosmic on some level.

[24 : 44] And, you know, that's what it's like in this life with Christ. We're longing for something more. But we do have something here.

So, let's look at a couple of scriptures from John that highlight this. He says this, and I think this is what we're longing for. This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

And then he prayed for us. Remember, I don't ask for these only, but also those who will believe in me through their word. That's us sitting right here. Jesus prayed for us. And he says what?

What's he praying for us? That they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am, to see me, see my glory that you have given me, because you love me before the foundation of the world.

You see, Jesus is the guide in this journey. He's protecting us. The battle has already been won. Okay? And we're designed for forever.

[25 : 54] That's what you're seeking in you, eternity. Okay? And it's only in Christ that you will find it. And forever is a real place. And Jesus is carrying you to that very real place, where you are meant to be, where you really want to go.

C.S. Lewis says this quote. I put it in your bulletin, and I'm sure you've heard this before. If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.

And you were. You were made for another world. See, religion is information. And boy, do we have a lot of information. But knowing God is eternal relationship in that real place forever.

And that actually starts now and continues into the forever. So when you're experiencing a season of doubt, uncertainty, whatever it may be, a faith crisis, and you're longing for something more, remember that that's actually a good thing.

You're not alone. What's happening is the dashboard light's going off that you're made for something else. And it's a reminder, you can just throw up a praise God in that moment, that this world's not going to be enough.

[27 : 13] You need something more than this world. What you need is Jesus Christ. Jesus is who he said he is. He's with us right where we are. And he's carrying us where we are meant to be.

And don't you think that Jesus understands hills and climbs? Didn't he climb up a hill and die on it? He did. And he carried a cross up that hill. And he walked the steps for us. He took our punishment so that we could be in this place with him forever.

He bled in our place. He ran out of breath so that we can breathe forever. And it was because of our sin. And then he willingly died as a sacrifice in our place so that now God the Father promises to forgive all of those who look to him in faith.

Faith is just the certainty of those things that he says are going to be true. You believe that they will be true. And you believe that he's the one who makes those things true. He promises forgiveness and freedom to all people who look to him with that true faith.

[28 : 19] The certainty of knowing that Jesus is who he said he is. You know, if I could ask God one question, there's a lot of questions. One would be why are things that are bad for you taste so good?

And why do things that are good for you taste so bad? That would be one. But then the deep theological question, because if you flip that, it would be easier, right? We'd all be super healthy. Because the things that we're supposed to eat would be the best things.

But he didn't. I digress. That would be one of my questions for him. The second question would be, why in the world did you die for me? Like, where did you ever get that in your head?

And, like, why? Can you just explain that? I don't understand it. I have no concept of why you would think of me. Other than love.

Right? But I would like to hear him explain it one day. I'd love to talk about it and just say thank you and give him, like, a big hug. So, but he's carrying us where we are meant to be, y'all.

[29 : 19] And he climbed that hill of cavalry and died in our place. And because of that, now there's no condemnation for those of you who are in Christ. So, it's not, though, merely just about the destination.

Don't believe there. If it's just about the destination, then it has nothing to do with your daily life. It's just something you put away like a retirement account that you touch later.

If Jesus is just about heaven for you, you're missing a lot of the gospel. It's incomplete. You're missing the part where when you wake up and you walk around and when you have a hard day, he's there.

Right? He's with you on the journey. He's on that hike with you until you get to the very top of Mount Zion. In fact, we realize he's carrying us and he's carrying us by that Holy Spirit.

He's beside us. He's the living water we need. He's the bread of life we crave until we reach the top of that. Because we were ultimately meant for another world.

[30 : 21] We were ultimately meant for another world. So, why does all of that matter? If I could sum it up this way, it's that you may be done, but God is not done with you.

I just want you to remember that today. In some way in your life, you may be done. You ever seen these? You ever had a computer crash and then you get this?

That happens to me all the time. That's a lot of us. You're overheating. You're crashing. You're looking back.

You're wondering what's happening in this world. That's not the place that God's made us to live all the time. The life he offers us, he did something about it.

So, we move from this more to you ever had a text message? Right? And when someone's not done writing, you get that little dot, dot, dot. Okay.

[31 : 13] So many of us are here in the crash mentality. But God's still writing. He's still writing you. He's still got things to send you. He's still got things he's going to do with you.

And that's the journey. Right? Always going until we reach the top. You know, the scriptures say it this way. I'm sure of this, that he began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Until then, it's still writing. That means that you may be done, but God is not done with you. And you have a purpose. And you know what that purpose is? You are a vessel of blessing.

There is a happy ending ahead. And Jesus is with you on the journey. And he's working all of these things to good. All of them together for good. And Beckett Davis Jr. ruined like a week of my life.

And he took all of our time up until the day before the concert. And then you know what? There was this radio contest on 104.3 called Beg for Bieber Tickets.

[32 : 21] And my wife called in. And she told the story of Beckett Davis Jr. And they gave her tickets to the show. And so she got to live that concert dream.

And now she's a bigger believer than ever. Right? I don't tell that to say, come to Jesus and all of your wildest dreams, craziest dreams will come true. No, no, no, no.

That was a fun ending to a story. In fact, come to Jesus and your life's going to be really hard. But you're not going to be alone. You're going to see God use you in incredible ways.

Spend some time with him. Ask him to help you see that. Go be a blessing to someone by just saying a kind word when you could not. Go experiment with this because it's an exploration.

And he's on the journey with you. So, we'll close with this. God made space.

[33 : 20] I've talked about this before. If I had to sum all this up. He shared it with you. Okay? Yet you're in an orbit. He's put you in an orbit.

To do something in that space. You're an explorer in this world. Looking around. These different creatures.

Look at these wonderful creatures here. There's an adventure every day. Right? And he's called you into that orbit to do something special. To take, guess what? His love. As you make discoveries on this adventure.

And you love the people around you. You evangelize. You talk about the great things that you see. Do you realize evangelism is love. And love is evangelism.

And you're made to love. But you're also very distracted. Right? God's not done with you yet, though. God is not done with you yet.

[34 : 17] Get excited for the adventure, y'all. Because sometimes we forget the exploration that he's called us to. It's a wonderful, wonderful thing. So, you may be done.

But God's not done with you. But I am done talking about that. And I love you. And I'm going to pray for you. And I'm here to walk with you. And these people are here to walk with you.

And we want to encourage you in your growth in Jesus Christ. So, the one big thing I want you to take away. Go spend some time with him this week. Find that rhythm.

And see where he sends you on this adventure. And if you want to talk about it, I would love for you to take me to lunch. And talk about what he's doing. Because this is an ongoing thing. I love you all very much.

I'm going to pray. Father, thank you for this time. Thank you for these wonderful people. What a privilege it is to get up here and just talk a little bit about you. Thank you that you are who you said you are.

[35 : 14] Thank you that you're with us right where we are. And thank you that you're carrying us where we're ultimately meant to be. Would you help us live that? Would you help us love you?

Thank you, Jesus, for the Holy Spirit.

And thank you for this wonderful church that you're doing something really special with in Huntsville and beyond. Pray your blessings on them. I pray your grace. And I thank you for Jesus Christ. It's in his name we pray.

Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.