

Living by Christ's Words

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Well, let's turn for a short time this evening to John chapter 17, where we've been having some studies over the past few weeks. John chapter 17, and tonight we're looking at verses 6 to 8. We've seen verse 6 already, but we'll read from verse 6. I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me. And they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me. And they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you.

And they have believed that you sent me. Verses 7 and 8 especially, as they flow from verse 6. As we saw verse 6 last time, but we come now to verse 7, which really, in a sense, is the result of what has been said in verse 6.

I have manifested your name to the people you gave me out of the world. And yours they were, you gave them to me. They have kept your word. And as a result of that, now they know that everything you have given me is from you.

[1 : 14] Then he further explains that when he says, For I have given them the words that you gave me. That's itself taking us into the relationship between God the Father and Jesus God the Son.

And in this wonderful combination, as John often does, he combines so many strands together, it's very difficult sometimes to separate them out.

Indeed, it's not right to separate them off entirely from each other. Anyway, the strands, for example, here that you find Christ's words, the knowledge that that brings, and also the believing aspect of it.

All of that is built into these two verses, 7 and 8. And as we look at these, we look, first of all, at the aspect of mediation, mediation on Christ's part that comes to us through these verses.

Because there is obviously a central role to Jesus himself in giving these words to the disciples that he mentions. But they are words that were given to him from the Father, which is emphasized also by him.

[2 : 26] I have given them the words that you gave me. There's that interaction between the Father and the Son, culminating in Jesus giving the words that were given to him to the disciples, so that they come through that, to know God, to understand who Jesus is, where he had come from, something about his work.

So mediation has to do with the role of Jesus between the Father and the disciples. The second element mentioned is reception on the believer's part.

And that involves acceptance of Jesus' words, which of course are the words of the Father, as we've said. But along with acceptance, you have knowledge.

He says now, they have come to know in truth that I have come from you, and they have believed that you sent me. So there's acceptance and knowledge, which is really combined also with faith, with the believing of who Jesus is and where he has come from.

So let's look at these very briefly tonight. The mediation, first of all, on Christ's part. As we said, we need to begin really in a sense at verse 8. For I have given them.

[3 : 39] The for at the beginning of the verse really shows you that he's giving an explanation of why it is things are as they are in verse 7.

They know that everything you have given me is from you for. The reason for that is I have given them the words that you gave me. And you can also see how the word everything, where Jesus says they know that everything that you have given me is from you.

That's further explained and specified, dealt with more specifically, when he speaks here about the words that you gave me that I have given to them.

So everything is really, in a sense, explained by the words that Jesus revealed to the disciples, spoke to the disciples. This is to do with Jesus' ministry here at that moment that he had been exercising to these disciples, that he's with here in this upper room and that he's praying with and praying for.

Once we'll see, that's going to be expanded out further. Although, in principle, this is really something that follows into our own experience as well. The words that come through Jesus, from Jesus, the words of the gospel, where Jesus is central, are words that come from God.

[4 : 56] You could say God as our Father, and through the Holy Spirit, they're blessed to us. And through that, we come to know who Jesus is, why he's significant, what his place is in the whole scheme of salvation.

So everything that the Father has given him, he has given to the disciples. And now he explains that, as we said, by, specifies it by the words that God gave him, the Father gave him. And this is really tremendously mysterious stuff. But it's also extremely precious to us, because we know that deep within that relationship between God the Father and God the Son is the transmission to us of the truth about God.

This is really where the foundation of everything is for us. That's why we're so insistent on the fact that we utterly believe and accept and wish to promote the fact that God, the one God, comprises the three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

And that we cannot understand our salvation in any way at all, really, unless we hold on to that great foundational truth about the Trinity. That's why that theology is so important.

[6 : 13] And you cannot begin to understand how the salvation that you enjoy, that you possess, has come into your possession, unless you begin with who God is and what God is.

And that's why Jesus here is so important in the words he's telling us, because he is saying this, in a sense, begins with the Father, but then given to me, I have then given it to the disciples.

Let's cast our mind back a wee bit to chapter 5. It will help us maybe to just see something very similar there in chapter 5, verses 19 to 20.

This is Jesus saying to the Jews again, who are accusing him of breaking the Sabbath and calling God his Father, making himself equal with God.

And in verse 19, so Jesus said to them, And truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing.

[7 : 11] For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.

And don't then to speak about giving life to those who were initially dead. So there you find we're taken into the depths of God, of the Trinity, of the being of God.

And what Jesus is saying is that he, as he works out this mission that he has been given on earth to complete, is actually doing what the Father actually gave him to do, what the Father has specified for him to do.

The words that the Father gave him are the words that he actually uses, that he teaches, that he presents. And what he's saying here in chapter 5 is the doings of Jesus, the acts that he does, the whole pattern of his life is something that initiates, is initiated with the Father.

It begins there because the Son can do nothing, he says, of his own accord. When you turn to chapter 7, and verses 16 to 18, just where we read a short time ago, verse 16.

[8 : 27] So Jesus, this is the Jews again marveling, how is it that this man has learning when he has never studied? They were absolutely amazed at the teaching of Jesus, knowing that he wasn't formally taught as their rabbis were taught.

And he says, Jesus says to them, my teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God, or whether I am speaking on my own authority, and so on.

He's saying there the teaching that he's given, in other words, the same as chapter 17, the words that he's been speaking, the truth that he's been divulging to the disciples, begins with the Father and is given to the Son, and the Son transmits that in his ministry to the disciples.

Now, as we said, there is a huge amount of mystery in that. But here is something that really controls our thinking about God and about ourselves. The gospel wasn't invented by human beings.

The words of Jesus in his ministry were not words that actually were given to him by any other rabbis or by the church of the time. The words of Jesus initiated with the Father came from the Father, and that's what Jesus was presenting.

[9 : 43] So you can see how there's complete compatibility and harmony, and we'll see that in our conclusion tonight, between the Father and the Son, in the revealing of that salvation, redemption, through the words that Jesus was using to these disciples.

But it's important we notice that Jesus is active in this. I have given them the words that you gave me, because sometimes people speak as if Jesus were just a kind of inert measure or means through which God speaks.

And indeed, some people theologically have had that view that Jesus is not divine. He was just a medium through which God actually spoke. And here is Jesus actually saying, it's not at all like that. I have this role with the Father and from the Father. So that in terms of the way in which the Son is in the world, he is actively involved himself in divulging God and speaking these words that the Father has given him.

And the other thing you can see from that is that as the mediator between God the Father and his people to whom he gives these words, Jesus is actually exactly what the Father intended.

[11 : 11] We're talking about things, of course, which are spoken about here, but which we really cannot enter into in any great depth. Certainly I cannot, anyway, because it really takes us into this mystery of the Trinity and the mystery between the Father and the Son.

In these words that were given by the Father to the Son and the Son then to the disciples. These are things which only God himself knows the actual full detail of.

But they're precious, that's a precious emphasis for us because it tells you that the Son gives to his people exactly what the Father actually gave to him to give to his people.

There is no modification on the part of Jesus of who the Father is, of what the Father has given him. So, in other words, when Jesus is saying, the words that I've given to you from the Father, they are exactly as he has received them as the mediator through whom these words come to us.

I know these things are very difficult and intricate and have a depth, really, that we cannot, as I say, enter into fully. But how precious is it that your salvation and my salvation tonight is itself based upon the exact and the perfect relationship between God the Father and God the Son.

[12 : 33] And that there is no possibility, whatever, that the Son has somehow or other fluked the words of God and just invented them himself.

That there is no possibility, whatever, that somehow there's something lacking in the words of Jesus, in the revelation that's come through him to us as lost sinners. That there is somehow a truth about God the Father that is somewhat different or even slightly different to what Jesus says about him or the words that Jesus uses.

you have tonight perfect mediator one who came from the father to reveal God to us and does so exactly and in the detail and the exactness that God the father himself gave to him of course Christ's mediatorship is a lot more than that you go into other parts of the scripture where you have the mediation of Jesus in terms of being our high priest this is in many ways speaking here in John 17 of the office of prophet along with priest and king the three great offices of Jesus as our savior and this is really we could say focusing more on the office of prophet revealing to us the will of God for our salvation as the catechism puts it and that's so you need to go somewhere else in the bible to deal more with the priesthood and the kingship of Jesus but what he is saying here is in terms of the words that he is given the revelation that he brings from the father to his disciples is exact and perfect just exactly as it should be that's the first thing the mediation on Christ's part for which we're thankful tonight that this is what's come to us in all its perfection and accuracy as words of the father secondly it speaks about reception and that's reception on the believer's part where he says I have given you them the words that you gave me and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you of course these disciples indeed like ourselves but these disciples then had much that they didn't understand fully that they couldn't yet understand fully because the cross had not occurred a resurrection had not occurred the coming of the Holy Spirit with the the ministry that the Holy Spirit as Jesus himself says in these chapters that would actually divulge more to them and explain more to them of the meaning of Jesus and the person of Jesus and the essence of salvation they weren't at this stage there yet they weren't at that particular juncture in their understanding and yet here is Jesus saying they have accepted these words that I have given them from you father such was their attachment to Jesus such was their relationship

lovingly to Jesus such was their relationships such was their relationships such was their convictions such was their conviction about who Jesus was and where he had come from that the words that he revealed to them and spoke to them were words that they accepted they accepted the truth of it they accepted the authority of it of them and they obeyed them and they believed them and it is important John's gospel is in many ways full of God's sovereign predestinating will we've seen that earlier the beginning of the chapter talks about the people that the father had given to Jesus something that happened in the election before the creation actually exist and John's gospel as we go through it you can see so much of that predestination of that sovereign will of God where he himself sets the parameters of salvation and of everything that comes to us in the way of our redemption but we're never allowed to think that because God is sovereign because God is in control of these things that because there's such a thing as God choosing his people before the foundation of the world we're never allowed to think therefore it is not we that is other than we ourselves we need to accept the words of Christ who need to obey the words of Christ who need to believe the words of Christ you see what he's saying these words he says you have given me I have given these words to them and they have received them and they have come to know and they have believed that you sent me

God didn't believe for them Jesus didn't believe for them they weren't forced into believing they willingly were made willing by God to believe them but they believed there's one of the wonders of our redemption the Bible will not allow us to avoid our responsibilities even though we know that God is sovereign that he has chosen his people that all of that is in his plan from all eternity that he is sovereignly in charge of all of that but the Bible never allows us to hide our responsibility in God's predestination even if we cannot match them together we are told and the Bible is such that the gospel addresses not our own ability to believe or to be saved the Bible the gospel addresses our responsibility it says believe it gives us imperatives it says you must do this all of these imperatives are based of course upon God's sovereignty but nevertheless they address our responsibility even although we know that we have an inability of ourselves to respond and to accept and to believe to serve God we are never allowed to actually lose sight of our responsibility and that's important when we come to witness to others whether it's in preaching or in our everyday witness we are never ever to actually give the impression that somehow people can just sit back and rely upon the sovereignty of God and say well if I'm in God's elect people

[18:57] I know I'm going to be saved you have to say to them well yes that is true at that level but if you're in God's people if you're in God's elect people then you will believe then you will repent then you will come to Christ then you will obey Christ that's all true of God's people and without these you will not be saved that's where we have to have the emphasis of the gospel according to its presentation to us in scripture of course we accept all about the sovereignty of God but not to the avoidance of our own personal responsibility and you notice secondly along with acceptance there's the knowledge factor in this as well now they have come to know that everything you've given me is from you and they have come to know in truth that I came from you that's what he's saying they have come to know not something they had to begin with but through these words through this teaching of Jesus they have come to know things about God and specifically these two elements now they have come to know where Jesus is from and that he was specifically sent by the Father because both things are important they have come to know that in truth I came from you the words in truth are important too because they came to believe these things and accept these things and know these things for sure they were not left in doubt they came to accept fully that this is where Jesus had come from that he came from the Father but along with that that the Father had actually sent him that too is a really important point to say along with the fact they knew where Jesus was from that he was from God but you could say that in a sense about any particular individual that had come in the name of God to present you could say that of the prophets you could say that of even preachers to this day that they're commissioned by God to declare God's truth through the scriptures but Jesus is different to that he's above that because there is especially when you go into other aspects of John's gospel when Jesus is saying here that they have come to know that in truth I came from you in other words the source of Christ is heaven it is God himself and that's who he is and that you sent me that there's a specific commissioning on the part of the Father to send the Son on this great mission as the Redeemer as the Mediator between God and sinners so that's briefly mediation on Christ's part reception on the believers part and many many other aspects of that but I realize that I mustn't go on too long because I know it's difficult for yourselves to sit with masks on and I don't want to actually overdo that emphasis but there are four points in application because at

the moment all we've done basically is go through the verses and looked at something of the theology of it something of the theology from Christ's point of view as to who he is but also the believers the disciples and their acceptance of it but there are four points of application that are really important practically for yourself and for myself and for all Christians tonight first of all this great truth about his mediatorship and the reception by us of who he is the knowledge of God through him first of all gives us peace of conscience because Christ is sufficient to deal with our needs as sinners and it gives us peace of conscience when we've come to know him and to accept him and to believe

who he is and to trust in him then we know that God's answer is in him to the problem and the dilemma of our sin and our guilt over which our conscience is disturbed and when we come to Jesus and to know him we come to know his sufficiency and I mean by that his sufficiency to deal with God's requirement and our need at the same time that's essentially what mediatorship is about at the very heart of it isn't it he represents God to us and the demands of God but he also represents us and our need before God in his own person these two things are brought together and so as he comes and fulfills that death of the cross and that resurrection everything indeed as John packs into his his ministry the ministry of Jesus well you come to see the sufficiency of Jesus every single aspect of God's requirement is met in him every single aspect of your need is met in him he is fully sufficient and that gives you peace conscience secondly it gives comfort to your faith because Christ as well as being sufficient

Christ is supreme he presides over our salvation he's in control of his own ministry he's in control of what he was doing here what he did afterwards even when he came to die the death of the cross it's more accurate to say that he gave himself to his captors rather than that they forced him to concede he is supreme and tonight that gives you the comfort for your faith even when there are things we cannot understand through our knowledge we believe that he is supreme that he is supreme over everything in the world tonight whether it's an election in America or the pandemic or anything in our own smaller lives every single aspect of that is under the supremacy of Christ as the one who has come from God to us and so it gives comfort to your faith when you have to as we often do just fall back on this great fact

Lord to whom shall we go you have the words of eternal life it gives peace to your conscience Christ is sufficient gives comfort to your faith Christ is supreme thirdly it gives fulfillment to your heart because Christ is satisfying and there is no satisfaction of soul without him but with him he is the source of your satisfaction he is the source of the fulfillment that your heart craves and that you know you cannot have in yourself or by your own ability or by other human means of ingenuity the fulfillment for which you were created and I was created is answered in the person and in the work of Jesus and when you come to know Jesus that gives you fulfillment of heart as well as peace of conscience and comfort to your faith because Christ is not only sufficient and supreme but satisfying where is your satisfaction where does it rest where does it emanate from isn't it from him isn't he central and foundational everything that satisfies your soul of course he is this Jesus that is mediating between the father and his people and fourthly it gives impetus to our worship because Christ is stimulating not only sufficient and supreme satisfying but stimulating the more we know Christ the more we actually come to understand of him and even the little we do understand of him is intensely stimulating for us we worship him we worship

God through him we worship because he has revealed to us God's worthiness to be worshipped we worship him and we worship God because of what Jesus what the father has done what Jesus has done what the Holy Spirit has done what God has done what he goes on doing our understanding the knowledge that he's speaking of here they have come to know and when you have come to know Christ that stimulates your heart to worship to bow before God to confess your sin to give thanks for his salvation to ask him to direct all the things that are in your worship whether it's private or public it all comes back to this person this wonderful great saviour who gives peace of conscience because he's sufficient who gives comfort because he's supreme who gives fulfillment because he's satisfying and who gives impetus to our worship because he is stimulating and we ask God to bless to us our thoughts on his word this evening