

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 11TH - 12TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

FROM DEATH TO LIFE (JOHN 5:24-30)

We're reading Jesus' reply to a group of religious leaders called Pharisees.

- After Jesus healed a man who had been crippled for thirty-eight years, this group became outraged because Jesus did it on the Sabbath and commanded the man to break one of their man-made religious rules.
 - They were also angry because Jesus claimed to be equal with God (vs. 17-18).
- Most modern people are not offended by a Jesus who teaches people how to love, forgive, and live peacefully with others as a teacher.

- However, they're deeply offended by a Jesus who has the audacity to claim an exclusive authority as Lord and God over every area of life.
- Specifically, Jesus' claims to be the only way to salvation and His teachings on the coming judgment are especially troubling.

Not only that, Jesus also teaches on human sexuality (Matt. 19; Matt. 5:32; Mark 7:21) and condemns all practices of sex that don't align with God's original design: one man and one woman in the context of a lifelong marriage covenant.

- It is for these reasons that the modern person often becomes angry at the teachings of Jesus and struggles to receive them in obedient faith.
- Often we think the modern equivalent of a "Pharisee" in the Gospels would be a very conservative, religious, Bible-believing church-going legalist.

- The predominant religion of America teaches that self is supreme, sex is synonymous with love and therefore has no boundaries, truth is completely relative, and (g)od is whatever we want him/her/it to be.

The Pharisees of this "religion" (moralistic, therapeutic universalism) hate the exclusive claims of Jesus and the clear teachings of the Christian gospel.

- Some of them see it as outright "dangerous" and full of hatred.
- To any who are threatened by His teachings and identity, Jesus speaks clearly about who He is and what He's come to do.

There is a coming judgment—we will all someday die and stand before God (vs. 24-27).

- Because we are sinners by both our nature and our choices, we will all stand guilty before Him on that day unless our sin and wickedness is atoned for.
- Anyone who hears the words of Jesus and believes in Him will have eternal life and will not come under that judgment (vs. 24).

When we believe on Him, we will pass from death to life as we hear the voice of Jesus and live (vs. 25).

- If we haven't believed on Jesus, we're spiritually dead right now.
- Jesus the Son of God has the right to grant spiritual life and to execute divine judgment (vs. 26-27).
- This is the truth of what Jesus has come to do that sometimes angers the modern mind.

Everyone who has ever died and who will ever die will someday be raised at the sound of His voice and stand before King Jesus (vs. 28).

- There will be a judgment for everyone who has done good things (the resurrection of life) and for everyone who has done wicked things (the resurrection of condemnation) (vs. 29).
- So...to go to Heaven we just need to do more good things than wicked things?

John's Gospel makes it very clear over and over again that people enter eternal life when they believe on Jesus Christ.

- But the lives we live form the test of the faith we profess (those who do good things in the sight of God are the ones who have been made good by Jesus).
- Jesus is completely qualified to be the perfect righteous judge because His power is in submission to God the Father (vs. 30).

EVIDENCE (JOHN 5:31-40)

Jesus requires from us faith in Him that is sincere, trusting, confident, and committed.

- But Jesus doesn't ask for blind faith.
- Jesus doesn't ask you to believe just on the basis of tradition or even pragmatism.
- Why should you and I believe that Jesus is Lord and trust Him completely with our lives?
- Jesus begins to tell of a testimony beyond His own regarding His identity (vs. 31-32).

1. HUMAN WITNESS (VS. 33-35)

The religious leaders accepted the work of John the Baptizer for a time and even sent their own delegation to examine his ministry.

- John operated in the office of the prophet and was a burning and shining lamp to the Jews regarding the coming of the Messiah.
- Even though they respected John's ministry, they couldn't see how it pointed to Jesus.
- Even if you reject Jesus, it's difficult to know what to do with the stories of people who have had their lives radically transformed by Jesus.
- One could argue that the single most important influencer in the formation of Western civilization has been Christianity.
- Hospitals, universities, and relief organizations have all been founded as Christian institutions by people who have been radically changed by Jesus.

2. THE SIGNS OF JESUS (VS. 36)

The works that Jesus performed are another witness regarding Jesus' identity and deity.

- Even though the healing of the man crippled for 38 years should've been enough evidence, Jesus states it was one of many works He would do.
- The greatest sign of Jesus is His resurrection, which is given to us as the ultimate proof that Jesus is everything He says He is.
- All other major world religions can point to geographical burial places of their founders and important figures.
- But Christianity is different—no burial site has ever been found or claimed for Jesus Christ.
- If we refuse to believe that Jesus rose from the dead...we've got some explaining to do (swoon theory, mistaken tomb theory, stolen body theory, hallucination theory).

3. THE WRITTEN SCRIPTURES (VS. 37-39)

The religious leaders studied, memorized, and thought upon the Scriptures continually.

- Yet, they were unable to receive Jesus as Messiah when He showed up because they didn't truly know the God the Scriptures spoke of.
- They studied the Scriptures, but they didn't abide in the truth of God's Word or recognize who the Scriptures testified about.
- There are well over 60 distinct O.T. predictions in regards to Jesus' life, ministry, and death.
- Not only were some predictions made 1,000 years before Christ was born, some were made 500 years before crucifixion was ever used as a form for capital punishment (Isaiah 53; Ps. 22:16)
- Astronomer and mathematician Peter Stoner picked out 48 prophecies.
- The probability of one man randomly fulfilling them all is 1 in 10 to the exponent of 157 (1 followed by 157 zeros).
- Yet, somehow Jesus fulfilled not just 48, but at least 60 of these prophecies!
- 66 books written over a 1600-year period by 40 authors in 3 languages on 3 continents that share a common storyline, theme, and message with no historical errors or contradictions. Coincidence?

"BUT YOU ARE NOT WILLING..." (VS. 40)

These religious leaders had all the evidence and testimony they ever wanted or needed to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

- Their obstacle in believing wasn't intellectual, it was volitional—they weren't willing to humble themselves and submit to Him as Lord.
- For many people this is exactly why they refuse to believe on and obey Jesus as Lord.

UNBELIEF (JOHN 5:41-47)

Jesus concludes this chapter with a contrast between His true motivation and the motivation of these religious leaders.

- He's come not to receive praise from others—but that's what these leaders lived for!
- He's come not to promote His own will, but only the Father's—but these leaders lived for self-promotion and glory.
- What kept them from believing on Jesus?

REASON 1: NO REAL LOVE FOR GOD OR TRUTH (VS. 42)

These leaders could hide behind their supposed intellectual obstacles, but their real reason for rejecting Jesus was their lack of love and desire for God and His truth.

- They'd willingly entertain other supposed messiahs who came in their own name, but they rejected Jesus because they weren't really looking for truth (vs. 43).
- Some people aren't really looking for truth or God, they're just looking for a version of reality that they can accept or that validates their lifestyle.
- People will willingly entertain some of the wildest and most bizarre ideas regarding spirituality if those ideas allow them to stay in control and continue living the way they want.

REASON 2: PRIDE AND THE FEAR OF MAN (VS. 44)

These religious leaders longed for and craved prestige and glory from one another so much that they were willing to sacrifice the honor that comes only from God.

- If we're simply living for the glory and approval that comes from other people, how can we believe in Jesus?
- We must choose whose acceptance we want.
- The teachings of Christianity are not popular in modern culture: if you believe in the Christian gospel you will be called narrowminded, ignorant, misled, bigoted, or even full of hate.
- What if you like being popular and cool? What if you like being accepted by the culture at large?
- You will amend, change, or completely throw out your understanding of the Christian faith in order to fit in with the culture at large.

Jesus concludes His teaching by stating that if these religious leaders didn't truly believe in Jesus, they didn't truly believe the words of Moses (vs. 45-47).

- The Old Testament Scriptures testified of Jesus and pointed ahead to His coming as the Messiah.
- But their stubborn hearts refused to believe in spite of the evidence that was given.

FLIMSY EXCUSES.

- Often what stands between us and Jesus are our own flimsy excuses (John 5:7).
- If we need evidence to believe in Jesus, evidence will be provided—but most of the time it's not a lack of evidence that keeping us from believing.
- For many people the cry for more intellectual evidence is a smoke screen to conceal the true motives for their unbelief.

"I like being popular and I don't want to be seen as uncool, out of touch, or bigoted by my friends, family, or the culture at large..."

- If you're living for the approval and glory of other people, how can you believe in and follow Jesus (vs. 44)?
 - You must decide whose acceptance you want.
 - Acceptance from people is fickle and uncertain: but honor from God is eternal.
- "I'm not really interested in truth, I just want an understanding of God and reality that affirms or validates the lifestyle I want to live..."**
- If you just want to stay in control and continue living however you want, you'll come up with your own bizarre understanding of spirituality.
 - Embracing lies that feel good is one of the most dangerous and damning spiritual practices in existence.

EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT.

1. Evidence of others who point to Jesus as Savior and Lord.
 2. Evidence of Jesus' resurrection.
 3. Evidence of the Scriptures and the fulfilled prophecies they contain.
- These things prove that Jesus is God, therefore He has the right to do and say whatever He wishes.
 - Everyone who has ever died and who will ever die will someday be raised at the sound of His voice and stand before King Jesus (vs. 28).
 - There will be a judgment for everyone who has refused Jesus' sacrifice on their behalf (vs. 29).
 - If we believe on Him, we will pass from death to life as we hear the voice of Jesus and live (vs. 25-26).