

"JOHN, WALK THRU THE BIBLE."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for Sermon: John 1:1-5, 14-18; 3:16-17; 20:30-31

Introduction.

I still remember so well when I surrendered my life to Christ in high school this was the book I was told to read first and I did. I love the Gospel of John and as they say you don't forget your first love. Since then, any time anyone has asked where they should start reading the Bible, I am not alone in saying start with John's Gospel. For many new Christians this is the first book of the Bible they read.

The Book

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are eyewitness accounts of the life and words of Jesus. The Gospels are not just traditions handed down. These are the testimonies of men who knew Jesus personally and intimately.

On the night before He was crucified Jesus promised:

John 14:16-17 I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth.

John 16:13-14 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

The Spirit enabled the apostles to remember exactly all the things Jesus said and did. The Spirit gave the disciples the power of total and perfect recall to guarantee what they wrote was completely accurate, true and trustworthy.

That work of the Holy Spirit continues to this very day. The enlightening work of the Holy Spirit is essential to our accepting and believing this Spirit-inspired testimony of these eyewitnesses.

The Uniqueness of John's Gospel.

I have explained how the first three Gospels are similar to each other, so much so there are called the Synoptic Gospels, the look alike Gospels. Mark has first and Matthew and Luke borrowed about 60% of Mark to include in their Gospel.

John is another story altogether. John is not like the other three. His Gospel stands out as most unique. 90% of John is not in the other three. There is very little overlap.

John starts his Gospel with creation, in the beginning. Jesus was present at creation. No other Gospel has as strange a beginning as John.

John's Gospel has no genealogy, no birth or childhood stories, no actual description of Jesus' baptism, no temptation, no sermon on the mount, no parables, no account of the transfiguration, no casting out of demons or healing of lepers, no institution of the Lord's Supper, no agony in Gethsemane, no account of His ascension and no Great Commission.

So maybe by now you are wondering just what is in John. Unique in John are all of chapters 2-4, turning water into wine, the conversation with Nicodemus, and the Samaritan woman at the well.

Also the resurrection of Lazarrus. Most especially the explicit identification with God. This is the spiritual Gospel, a Gospel more uniquely focused on the identity and purpose of Jesus as the son of God.

But before we go further into that, let's consider the author.

John

John was a fisherman, the brother to James, son of Zebedee, one of those called the Sons of Thunder. He is not named by name in the Gospel but calls himself the beloved disciple, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

His mother was Salome, sister to Mary, Jesus' mother. It also helps explain the particular closeness of Jesus and John (John 21:7).

John 21:7, 20, 24 That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

20 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?”

24 This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

John stands out as the “beloved disciple,” one of the inner circle of three with Peter and James, who knew Jesus most intimately. He was one of the first ones called by Jesus, he was with Jesus from the very beginning and personally witnessed Jesus being pierced in the side (19:35).

John begins his first letter to the churches with this powerful statement:

I John 1:1, 3 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life ... that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you.

He was with Jesus during His entire public ministry to the very end, and he was the first one to visit the empty tomb. He saw with his own eyes the abandoned linen wrappings and facecloth. John 20:8 says when he saw he believed.

1:1-18 Prologue

1:19 – 12 Public ministry of Jesus.

12:23 – 20. Private teaching and the Last Week

21 Epilogue

Purpose, theme

Completely unique in all the Gospels, John does something never done in the previous three. He turns outwardly toward us and directly addresses us, he breaks the fourth wall.

The fourth wall in theater is the front wall, the imaginary, invisible barrier separating the audience and the actors on the stage. When a character directly addresses the audience, it is known as “breaking the fourth wall.”

John enters into a dialogue with you and me. He confronts us, he wants us to believe.

John 20:30-31 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but 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.*

What we should believe. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

In order for us to have salvation, we have to believe Jesus is God. John starts with that.

Jesus is God.

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:14-18 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John records Jesus repeatedly claiming to be God, to be the Son of the Father, to be I am.

Many people today like to talk about Jesus as a wise, wandering sage, a radical prophet, a great and gifted teacher, a model businessman, or a reflection of God's character.

But do you know why none of that holds any water? First of all, because Jesus never claimed to be any of those things, He only claimed to be God.

And second, because of the reaction Jesus got. What Jesus taught aroused a violent reaction, it wasn't just wise teaching about being kind to each other. Jesus was hated, and none of those things would have made Him hated.

They took offense, they called Him a liar and a blasphemer, they tried to kill Him. No, these reactions are the result of how Jesus described Himself as God.

A clue to who Jesus is, is seen in the strength of opposition, this was not just a Galilean carpenter, a poor Nazarene.

Jesus claimed to be God and the Jews insisted, “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God” (19:7).

You want further proof. Consider that Jesus is the only historical figure who is still hated to this day. He is more than just a teacher, prophet, philosopher, healer, miracle worker. Those people in history are not hated. Ask yourself why Jesus is hated today?

Why we should believe. These are written that you may believe.

John answers this in how he structures his Gospel and what he includes.

John gives seven titles for Jesus just in chapter one

The Lamb of God (John 1:29)

The Son of God (John 1:34, 49)

Rabbi (John 1:38, 49)

The Messiah (or Christ) (John 1:41)

The Son of Man (John 1:51)

The King of Israel (John 1:49)

Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:45)

The gospel of John includes only seven miracles—John calls them “signs”—to demonstrate the deity of Christ and illustrate His ministry.

Water to wine (John 2:1-11)

Healing the official’s son (John 4:46-54)

Disabled at pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-18)

Feeding of 5000 (John 6:5-13)

Walking on water (John 6:16-21)

Healing the man born blind (John 9:1-17)

Raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-44)

All these signs prove Jesus’ divinity.

John gives us the seven I ams.

Bread of Life
Light of the World
Door of the sheep
Good Shepherd
The Resurrection and the Life
The way, the truth, the life.
The true vine

The result of believing. That by believing you may have life in his name.

John is called the Gospel of Belief.

I remember in third grade Sunday School being given the assignment to find and count all the believes. The reward was a huge candy bar. I vaguely recall missing out because I missed a couple.

The word believe is used 98 times in Greek (Bible Gateway has 84 times in ESV), more than the other three Gospels combined.

John 1:7, 12, 50; 2:11, 22f; 3:12, 15f, 18, 36; 4:21, 39, 41f, 48, 50, 53; 5:24, 38, 44, 46f; 6:29f, 35f, 40, 47, 64, 69; 7:5, 31, 38f, 48; 8:24, 30f, 45f; 9:18, 35f, 38; 10:25f, 37f, 42; 11:15, 25ff, 40, 42, 45, 48; 12:11, 36ff, 42, 44, 46; 13:19; 14:1, 10ff, 29; 16:9, 27, 30f; 17:8, 20f; 19:35; 20:8, 25, 27, 29, 31
(John's epistle - 1 John 3:23; 4:1, 16; 5:1, 5, 10, 13)

What does believing mean? Jesus answers, “believe in the one he has sent” (6:28-29).

John 1:12-13 “To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent or of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”

The point of John is not just to provide a biography of Jesus, but to evoke faith in Jesus as the Christ. For John, it is not enough simply to report resurrection appearances. A response of faith is essential to receive God’s offer of life through His name. John wanted “you” to know that as “you” read John’s gospel including his report of the resurrection appearances and

believe, “you” are encountered by this Christ who lived and was crucified in history and who is alive today according to the Scriptures, and He gives “you” life in His name!

John 20:30-31 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but 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.*

Do you confess and believe the resurrected and ascended Jesus is your Lord and your God? Do you define yourself as a believer? As a follower of Jesus?

John alone gives us the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus.

John 3:14-19 the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever *believes* in him may have eternal life.

16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever *believes* in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever *believes* in him is not condemned, but whoever does not *believe* is condemned already, because he has not *believed* in the name of the only Son of God.

The woman at well

John 4:41-42 And many more believed because of his word. 42 They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

Man born blind

John 9:35-38 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” 36 He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” 37 Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” 38 He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

John alone gives us the story of Thomas in chapter 20. No one expressed doubt more strongly in the NT than Thomas and no one in the NT made greater demands than him before believing. You can be as strong a doubter and disbeliever as Thomas and still become a believer.

Thomas does all the doubting for us and receives all the affirmation for us.

John 20:25, 27-29 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”

28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*”

Implications and application.

This final Gospel combined with the other three give us everything God intended us to have in order that we might possess eternal life in Jesus Christ.

This book is one of, if not the last, of God’s gifts of special revelation for His glory and the salvation of our eternal souls.

Doubt is nothing new. Many doubted Jesus when He was right there with them, speaking with authority and doing miracles with great power. The people most privileged to know Jesus, to hear Jesus’ preaching of the Gospel, to see His miracles, they were the most hardened of heart.

Have you ever prayed, “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.” A good answer to that prayer is to read the Gospel of Belief, the Gospel of John. More souls have believed in Jesus through the reading of the Gospel of John than any other book in the Bible!

When you are assailed with doubts, confusion, fear, worry, uncertainty, hesitation, suffering, death. Hear the profound comfort

John 14:1 Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

Believe. Be a believer. Make believing the essential identifying foundation stone of your soul. Know the profound blessing of being a believer. Flesh and blood did not reveal this.

Matthew 16:16-17 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

John 1:12-13 To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 15:4-5 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.