

Faith in Jesus Christ (John 20:31)

Boys and girls, if I would ask you to write on a piece of paper what your favourite book is, what is your favourite book? Especially those of you who are bit older, and able to read, what is your favourite book? What if somehow you would be banished to an island in the Pacific, and you could only take one book with you, what book would you take along? Of course, that's not only a question for our children, but it's a question for all of us. What is the favourite book of our lives?

Of course we all know the answer, what *ought* to be the favourite book of our lives, the most precious book of our lives, that we would take to an island if that's all we could take: it would have to be the precious word of God!

Our world is filled with books. We can go throughout the land and we find large libraries, we can go to the library of Congress where they have every book that's published in the United States. There's a vast amount of literature available throughout the world.

And yet, of all the books that have ever been published, there is only one Book that ultimately is of real and everlasting value. Boys and girls, you know, of course, why the Bible is so special. You know why the Bible is not like any other book. There is no other book in the world like the Word of God. Because that's exactly what it is, the Word of God. When you go to a book store or a library, and pull a book off the shelf, the name of the author is written on that book. It's always a human author. But it is not so with the Word of God. Even though God used men to write it down, ultimately God Himself is the author of His very own Words.

Congregation, I must ask you a question as you sit here this evening, as you come here to worship in the house of God, a question that I need to ask myself as well,. I ask you, what does that Word of God mean to you? What place does the Word of God have in your life? How precious is the Word of God to you? Is it more precious than gold, and as the psalmist says, sweeter than the honeycomb? Does the word of God mean everything to you?

Boys and girls, I hope you have a Bible, and I hope you read it. I hope that at least once a day you open it, and you actually read it, especially as you get older. Because the Bible is God's extraordinary gift to us, the children of men. For without the Bible, we would live in total ignorance of who God is. Without the Bible, this world, which is already a world that dwells in darkness, would have no light whatsoever. And so, what an unspeakable and inexpressible gift the Word of God is.

Tell me, what does your Bible mean to you? And then I will tell you who you are. Ultimately, also from God's side, our real identity is revealed in what the Word of God means to us. When you read Psalm 119, you will not be in any doubt what the Scriptures meant to the psalmist. All of Psalm 119 is an amazing doxology consisting of 176 verses where the psalmist in every conceivable way magnifies the Word of God.

That's why, with God's help, I want to focus on a verse that is often read, but rarely considered, especially when we deal with the post resurrection appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the end of John 20, John makes an amazing statement. Let me begin at verse 30. He says, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:" And here comes our text... "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

Boys and girls, I think you could figure this out, if you sat next to me, and I asked you to help pastor write down what is this text all about. Hopefully you would be able to say, 'Well, this text

talks about believing in Jesus.’ Correct! that is what this text is all about. Faith in Jesus Christ, or Jesus the Christ, as He is referred to here. That’s the focal point of this text.

Two simple points:

First of all, John tells us that everything he has written is about Jesus. He said “these are written”. Some Bible scholars believe that originally John ended his gospel here, that this was his concluding thought. As if to say, here is my explanation why I, at age 90, was moved by the Spirit to write all of this down. All of what I’ve written is so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ. That’s what I refer to as the objective of the Scriptures. What I mean by that word objective, is the *purpose* for which God has given us the Scriptures: that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God.

Secondly, faith in Jesus Christ yields eternal life. It says, “and that believing”. In other words, if we do believe in this Jesus Christ, the result will be that we will have life through His name. Every name that is mentioned here, Jesus.. the Christ... the Son of God.. all of them together in a wonderful way sets before us what that life is, the life that is the portion of all those that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, faith in Jesus Christ. First of all, it is the objective of the Scriptures, and secondly, it yields eternal life.

1) Congregation, you know that the gospel of John, among the four gospels, is unique. John wrote it at the end of his ministry, probably as he resided in Ephesus. That meant that as he wrote this gospel John had a unique vantage point. He was now removed at some distance from the actual time that Jesus walked upon the earth. He had served the church; he had seen the marvellous work of the Holy Spirit causing salvation to come to the Gentiles.

But there was one thing that alarmed him. He began to sense that there were those who were questioning the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ. And John understood correctly that the entire truth about Christ falls or stands with His Godhead. If Jesus Christ isn’t God, He cannot be the Saviour.

And so therefore, John, moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote this book. That happened so often in the history of the New Testament, that God used occasions that were happening in the church, errors that were beginning to rear their ugly head, to direct His servants to address those issues, and thereby establish the truth.

That’s why the Gospel of John was written, and that’s why this Gospel is such an extraordinary witness to the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s why, as you know, it begins with those remarkable words, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and all things were made by him.” John deliberately makes a connection with Genesis 1:1 where it says “In the beginning God”. He immediately establishes a fundamental truth, that the Son of God whom he will be writing about, the Jesus that he will be addressing in this gospel, He is ultimately the eternal and the living Word of God.

That’s why in his gospel, John does not focus on every single miracle, every single event, some of which are recorded in the other three gospels. We call Matthew, Mark and Luke the synoptic gospels for they give a summary of Jesus’ ministry. But by the time John wrote his gospel, he assumed that the people in the churches to whom he was writing had read those three gospels. He

wanted instead to emphasize those events that specifically highlighted the fact that He was the eternal Son of God.

That's why only in John do we read about the miracle of water being changed into wine. Because by means of that miracle, John wanted to highlight that Jesus of Nazareth was the Creator in the flesh, capable of changing water into wine.

That's why only in the gospel of John we have the famous seven "I am's" where on seven different occasions Jesus identifies Himself as the "I am", as Jehovah in the flesh.

That's why only in the Gospel of John do we find the record of Jesus dealings' with Thomas. I want to focus here on the amazing confession that Thomas made. You know that Thomas had been in the bonds of unbelief. And foolishly, he had remained home when he should have assembled himself with the disciples. Because he failed to do so, he missed the first appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples.

But then we see how a week later, Jesus lovingly deals with this doubting apostle, how He graciously draws him out. He revealed to Thomas that He was all-knowing. This is significant. Jesus revealed to him that He knew exactly what Thomas had said to the other apostles: He was all-knowing. And we know from those verses that we read together, that immediately it was no longer necessary for Thomas to actually touch the scars in His hands, and to put his hand in His side. When Jesus powerfully confronted him with His Godhead, immediately Thomas knew how mistaken he had been. Immediately the bonds of unbelief were broken.

That's why John records this. It was as if the light suddenly flooded the mind of this apostle, so that suddenly he understood who Jesus was better than any of the other apostles. And he makes an amazing confession: he says "My Lord", and very importantly, "My God!" This is the first time in the gospels that one of the disciples actually acknowledges the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many commentators have correctly concluded that Thomas' confession was the greatest confession that a man can make. It doesn't get better than that.

This is the bottom line of what God wants His people to know. The great goal of all divine instruction, of the ministry of both Word and sacrament, is to lead believers to that understanding, so that they will confess with Thomas "My Lord, and my God."

This matched exactly with what Jesus had said to Mary Magdalene. Again, it is only John who records that, because John's goal was to focus on the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is earlier in chapter 20 that Jesus gave a wonderful assignment to Mary Magdalene. He said "Go tell my brethren that I ascend my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." And here Thomas confesses it, "My Lord" he says, "and My God."

Oh what a privilege it is to be able to say that. This is the privilege of every believer, and it is only because of our ignorance and our foolishness that so often we stop short of that confession. But nothing pleases God more, nothing delights Him more, as when we so understand the Gospel, that when Christ is set before us, that we too respond by saying, "My Lord, and my God".

This is exactly what Martin Luther meant when he famously said that the essence of true religion is all wrapped up in these personal pronouns. It is one thing to be able to say that Christ is a wonderful Saviour, and a willing Saviour, but it is another thing to be able to say He is *my* Saviour, He is *my* Lord, and He is *my* God.

So I ask you, my dear congregation, have you ever confessed that? Have you ever humbly confessed that in response to the Gospel? Have you so embraced the Gospel that you have said, 'Oh Lord Jesus, thou art also *my* Lord and *my* God'? Congregation, that is the bottom line, that is the only comfort in life and death, to know that I belong to Him, that I no longer am my own, but that I belong to Him, that He is my Lord and that He is my God.

It is as if John is saying, that's really why I wrote my gospel. I wrote my Gospel, inspired by the Spirit, to lead believers throughout the world to that glorious acknowledgement. He says, "these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ." There is some difference of opinion between commentators, but I am more inclined to agree with the majority of commentators who say, He is referring to his entire gospel.

John says here, 'I didn't write everything down.' At the very end of chapter 21, he says the same thing again: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Jesus said a lot more, and did many more miracles, than has been recorded in the Gospels. Probably Jesus appeared many more times to his disciples than have been recorded in the Gospels. What this simply means is that when the Holy Spirit moved the men to write the Gospels, when he moved John to write his gospel, he sovereignly moved him to record those events, those signs of His Godhead, which would prove to be of significance, even for us in our day.

I agree with those commentators that say, even though John is here talking about his gospel in particular, that this ultimately applies to all of the scriptures. We could say the entire Word of God has been written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Congregation, we will never, never understand the purpose of this Book, we will never understand the contents of this Book, unless we understand this fundamental truth - that this Book is about Jesus Christ.

This is the written Word of God, given to us so that we might know the Living Word of God. And that's why the only way we can properly read the Scriptures, and the only way we can properly benefit from the Scriptures, is to always have this in mind, no matter where we are reading in the Bible, whether it's in Genesis or in Revelation. Always keep in mind, the written Word of God is about the Living Word of God. That's the common denominator of all the Scriptures.

Of course it makes sense because the Scriptures have been inspired by Whom? You know that the Scriptures have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. And what do we know about the Holy Spirit? We know that He in a very special way is the Spirit of Christ. He is the Spirit of the Living Word. Jesus told us that this Spirit would come and that His work is to glorify Him. The Spirit of the Living Word, the Spirit of the Son of God, is the same Spirit who has inspired the writing of the written Word so that through the written word He would be able to glorify and magnify the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me just give a few passages that emphasize that so clearly. In John 5:46 Jesus is speaking to the Scribes and Pharisees, and he said, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me..." Listen carefully... "For he wrote of me." He was saying to the Scribes, 'Go back to Moses, read Moses again, and now pay attention, because Moses wrote about me.' The books of Moses are about me!

In Luke 20:42 and 44, Jesus clearly indicates that the Psalms bear witness to Him. He says, "And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?" Jesus is clearly saying that in Psalm 110, the psalmist is speaking about Me, because I am David's son in my human nature, but in my divine nature, I am his Lord.

So the books of Moses, and the Psalms speak of Jesus, but also the prophets. Again, listen to what Jesus says Himself, in Luke 24:27 to the men of Emmaus. “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” There you have it. Christ gives the key to those men, he says, ‘Here is the key that unlocks the riches of the scriptures: just remember, they all speak about me.’ In verse 44 he says “All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.” So, Moses, the prophets, and the psalms. This is a summary statement that speaks of the entire Old Testament Scriptures. So He is saying, the entire Old Testament scriptures are all about me!

Which is of course what Jesus was teaching those men of Emmaus. That’s why He hid His identity. He did not want them to be distracted by His physical appearance. He wanted them to pay attention instead to what He was saying, and the moment they recognize Him, He is gone. He wanted them to remember this unforgettable lesson: to read their Bible in terms of Him.

In Acts 10:43 Peter when he is speaking to Cornelius, he makes this similar statement, “To him give all the prophets witness.” All the prophets - the entire Word of God. In the New Testament we see it even more clearly, but let’s never forget that the New Testament simply brings together all that is recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. It brings it all together in the Person and the Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. They all are written “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”

Simply put, God has given us those Scriptures. You have a Bible in your possession today. Boys and girls, you have a Bible: what a privilege that is! You have a Bible! I hope that your Bible isn’t just collecting dust. I hope you read it. There are many human beings, many children, who don’t have a Bible; but you do have a Bible because God has directed your life in such a way that you have a copy of His Word.

Why do you have a Bible? Why is the Bible being preached today here? It’s a gift! Listen carefully: it is the gift of a Father who loves His Son, and because He loves His Son, He wants the world to know about His Son, the Son of His good pleasure. The same John in 1 John 5 calls the Bible “the record that God gave of His Son.” That’s what the Scriptures are. The Father’s record of His Son.

The reason He has given us the Scriptures is so that we might become acquainted with His Son. The Father wants us to read the Bible with that purpose, to read it prayerfully, and to ask whether God by His Spirit will so enlighten our understanding that we will discover the beauty of His only begotten Son, in His Word. Oh, what a precious gift the Bible is!

Before the fall there was no need for a Bible. Adam and Eve, they had that wonderful fellowship with God every morning and every evening, they had a perfect mind, a perfect understanding. Adam understood the animals so well, he was able to give them an appropriate name that exactly suited their nature. That’s how brilliant and how understanding he was. He did not need a Bible. But now as fallen creatures we are ignorant, and we live in ignorance of our Maker.

That’s why it is so amazing that God has given us the gift of His Word, that He gives that to a fallen world, to fallen human beings, who by nature have zero interest in this Book. Zero interest, zero desire to know what is in that Book, and yet God sovereignly brings that Word into your life. He has sovereignly brought it into your and my life, because He wants you to know His Son, because there is no life apart from His Son.

The only way we can come into a right relationship with God again is in and through His only begotten Son. And that is God's desire you see, that not only we would *know* about His Son, but His desire is that we would *believe* on that Son, whom He reveals to us in His Word. That we would believe on Him, that we would trust in Him. That is the only way we can be reconciled with God.

That is the great goal of all Gospel ministry, a goal that I may never lose sight of. Namely, that as I preach the gospel, as I proclaim it to you, the ultimate objective must always be, that you respond to that Word by believing in the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. By believing that He is the Christ, the Son of God.

Isn't it remarkable how much John says here in just a few words? As you know, the name Jesus means Saviour, a Saviour who saves from sin. Then John tells us that He is the Christ. He doesn't just say that Jesus is Christ, no He is *the* Christ. He is the Messiah, He is the Anointed One of God. Christ is not really another name, it is His title. Let's try to remember that. Jesus is the personal name of the Saviour, and Christ is His title. As Jesus, as Saviour, He is God's Anointed One.

Anointed for what? Anointed for three things as we see in Lords Day 12. Anointed to be Prophet, Priest and King. And that's exactly the kind of Saviour we need. We need a Saviour who first of all teaches us about God as prophet. We need a Saviour who as Priest reconciles us with God, and brings us into a right relationship with God. We need a Saviour who is King, who rules and who will govern our hearts. A Jesus who is the Christ.

That title tells us that He is a completely qualified Saviour, completely qualified to save me, a lost sinner. To save me from my sins, but also to restore me as a fallen human being to be what God originally created me to be. Jesus, the Christ.

But also that He is the Son of God. Not only is He a *qualified* Saviour, as the Christ, Prophet, Priest and King, but He is also a fully *able* Saviour. Because He is the Son of God, He is equal to the Father. He is a divine Saviour, and because He is a divine Saviour He is able to save us! Without Him being a divine Saviour, all these qualifications would ultimately fall short. But that's the beauty of the Gospel, that it sets before us a *suitable* Saviour, and an *able* Saviour, and above all, also a *willing* Saviour.

That's why when Peter was called upon to testify before the Sanhedrin, to give an account of why they had healed that lame man in the temple, he uttered those amazing words, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."

What John is saying here is so important for us: there is only one God-honouring way to which we are to respond to the Scriptures. The entire written Word of God has this as it's goal, as it's objective, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." John is saying, the only proper way, the only way that is pleasing to God, is when we respond to His word by believing it. And especially by believing in the Christ of whom that Word testifies.

That's why, congregation, having the Bible, the Word of God, next to your bed, coming to the house of God, not only is it a *privilege*, but it is amazing *responsibility*. John is telling us that there is no such thing as being neutral. When you read your Bible, God is speaking to you at that moment. When you come to the house of God, God is speaking to you. And there is no such thing as neutrality. We respond to it either by faith, or we set it aside in unbelief. It's one or the other. There is no grey area, there is no in-between area.

And so I ask you this evening, my dear congregation, what is your response to the Word of God? What have you done with the Word of God? That Word that has been part of your and my life all the days of our lives. It's one or the other. Either we believe, or we don't believe. God looks upon us this evening, and He knows we whether we are believers, or whether we are unbelievers.

If we do not take refuge in Christ, if we do not go to Him in the way of repentance, if we do not embrace Him by faith, then ultimately we are setting Him aside. Then we are not believing the record that the Father has given of His Son.

And so I want to emphasize again with all the love that is in me, my dear congregation, you MUST respond to the Word of God! That's not optional. You MUST respond to the Word of God! You MUST believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God! Believing in Christ is not optional for sinners.

Oh, I ask you with all urgency, where do you stand today? Because when God judges you, ultimately He will judge you by what you have done with His Word, He will judge you by what you have done with His only begotten Son.

That's why Jesus He pressed the disciples and said, "Who do men say that I am?" and they had all kinds of answers, but then He asked, "Who do you say that I am?" And then Peter beautifully said, "Thou art the Christ; thou art the Son of the Living God."

My dear friend, it will only end well with you, your life will only end well if you have believed on the Son of God, if you have taken refuge in Him, if you have come to Him, if you have trusted in Him. This Saviour, who in His Word so lovingly and so urgently invites you to come to Him, this Saviour who through His Word draws so near to you, this Saviour who declares to you in His Word even this evening, 'Sinner, I have come to save such as you are. Sinner, I offer myself to you without money and without price. Sinner, I promise you that if you come to me, I will in no wise cast you out. I promise you that if you believe on my name, I will give you eternal life. And I will pardon all of your sins.' That is the precious promise of the Gospel.

Therefore, God forbid that any of us would perish, not having believed in the only begotten Son of God. Oh, how rich is the promise that believing, the apostle says, "ye might have life through His name." That's the incredible benefit, the extraordinary benefit that is promised in the Gospel to whoever believes in Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God. That you might have life through His Name.

The name Jesus tells us that if we believe on Him, we will be completely reconciled with God. That nothing will separate me from God again. That means when I trust in Jesus, the barrier of separation is gone, there is complete reconciliation to all who put their trust in Jesus. "Life through His name". Not only complete reconciliation, but also complete restoration. A complete restoration of the broken relationship between God and us. That's why Jesus said, "I ascend unto my God and your God", as if to say, 'This is what I have accomplished by my death and resurrection - I have accomplished the restoration of that relationship between God and man, the restoration of that Father/Child relationship.' "Life through His name."

But also life through that precious name of the Son of God. Lords Day 9 so beautifully says that 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the sake of His Son, is also my Father.' Dear congregation, this so wonderfully reminds us of why the eternal Son of God became the Son of man. He did it, so that we, the sons and daughters of man, sons and daughters of Adam, that we might become again the sons and daughters of the Living God. That's why the same John writes in 1 John 3:1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

All of that is wrapped up in what John is saying. He is saying, whoever believes in this Saviour receives all those benefits: reconciliation, restoration, and adoption - eternal sonship. Such are the benefits for all those who believe in His name.

“That ye might have life through His name.” In the Greek here, it is implied that we continue to believe. The life of the believer is a life-long of believing. A life-long of ever again looking to that same Christ. And the more we do, the more we take refuge in Him, the more we trust in Him, the more we interact with Him, the more we are going to realise this precious life that is now our portion as a result of it.

What is that life? Ultimately, life is to have a personal relationship with God through Christ, and to enjoy fellowship and communion with this God in and through Christ. That’s living. That’s how we were created. My dear friend, you are not really living unless you again through Christ begin to enjoy union and communion with the Triune God.

And so we have come to the conclusion. “These are written.” The gospel of John is written, all of the Scriptures are written, “these are written that ye might believe Jesus is the Christ.” What a wonderful affirmation, that God is a God who has no pleasure in our death, but that we would turn unto Him and live. He has made that so amazingly clear by giving His Son in the fullness of time, and He continues to make it clear by giving us His Word, even in this evening hour.

So again I ask you, my friend, what do you think of the Scriptures? What does the Bible mean to you? What have you done, what are you doing with the Word of God? Have you believed that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God? Again we quote these remarkable words of John 3:36 “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Amen.