

8.6.23 Sermon

Recap of John – Final Sermon on John

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

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Good morning. Good morning. Good morning.

As the pressure builds, it's so good to see you and so good to have the opportunity to speak in front of you this morning. What I want to do is marry this all together as we reflect on the book of John. John tries to express certain messages to us, and some of these messages might be familiar from over the last two years and eight months.

So I'll start with a challenge. This is like being in class when the professor gives you an unexpected pop quiz — unfair, but it's still done. What is one thing that stands out for you in the book of John? What has it been? Anyone? Can't remember?

God is clingy. Ah, so I need to note that. God is clingy. Sandra mentioned that. Any other thoughts? Because from what we've seen, the book of John is so wildly different from the others. Someone might even suggest that John might be full of himself. The disciples made several mistakes. They were so very human, even ridiculous at times. But God loved them, forgave them, and used them for His purposes. We can be ridiculous too, can't we? I'm actually glad they were so human.

Other thoughts? This discussion is enlightening. In the other Gospels, Jesus tells parables. But in the Gospel of John, Jesus *is* the parable. If anyone online wants to join this discussion, please drop your thoughts in the chat, and we'll integrate them.

Eternal life starts now. That's a profound thought. It gives me a lot to work with. John is described as the rock, distinctly different from Peter.

Any other perspectives? Some people highlight that we always look at things from Jesus's point of view. But consider the Pharisees, the crowd; they all had their unique perspectives. They were trying to navigate based on their understanding. Yes, that's a valid point. There's no barrier that God won't break to find us. That's a powerful sentiment. You've all provided valuable insights. Let's take one more. Anyone?

I was afraid you guys would have missed in case I didn't remember anything. One thing that really sticks out here is that St. Peter was always putting his foot in his mouth. And yet, Jesus still used him. Peter had a habit of putting his foot in his mouth, but Jesus still chose to use him.

Is there any? Not yet? Okay. So let's move on. I agree with you on every point that stands out. As we try to recap the book of John and discuss topics we've covered over the past two-plus years, we'll delve deeper into these aspects. But first, let's read these verses. We'll then discuss and integrate what you recall, and what John recalls, about his experience walking with Jesus during his three and a half years of ministry. It's fascinating to note that it took us two years and eight months to discuss just three and a half years of Jesus' ministry. So much was happening during that time.

But before we dive deeper, let's pray. Dear God, thank you for today. I am grateful for this moment in time where we, the community of Christian Cornerstone Christian Fellowship and those listening worldwide, can share this moment with you. We ask that you speak to us, making your word clear and allowing your message to resonate in our hearts. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.

Now, let's read a text. Displayed on the screen, it says John 21, verses 24-25: "This is a disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them. And we know that this testimony is true. But there are also many other things that Jesus did. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

By ending this way, John emphasizes that while he has shared much about his personal experiences with Jesus, it is still not enough. John, being a responsible speaker and writer, knows that sometimes, despite having much to say, it's essential to remain concise and focused. John wants to convey that he didn't accompany Jesus with the intent of documenting every act and miracle of Christ. That wasn't his primary goal. However, now, reflecting on his life, he feels the need to capture and convey certain standout moments.

John wishes to leave readers with insights into his experiences, highlighting the positive aspects. He also offers an apology, expressing regret for potentially omitting details that might be significant to others.

John acknowledges that there are other gospels or writings that might cater to one's thirst for knowledge about Jesus. But he wants to stress that this account is his perspective. Other gospels, like those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, have different objectives. Some delve deeper into the theology of God, discussing how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah. Others might present parables and narratives that showcase the grandeur and power of a somewhat distant, majestic God.

That is there in Rome.

I have a different role that I want to share with you. I want to tell you about my personal relationship with Jesus, which may be missing in some of the other documents. Right. So, Dave mentioned that John may be a little bit full of himself, right? He speaks of this majestic God. But then John claims, "I am the one he loves." So, there's this difference. Where did that come from? How did we get to this point?

I hope that each and every one of you gets something out of this message today. But I want to let you know that my primary focus and the people I am reaching out to today are those who are lonely. Those who are at a point in their life where they feel isolated, separated, and alone, right? Why is that resonating with me right now?

When I talk about being alone, I mean feeling disconnected. You're isolated from people and genuine relationships, which is different from the unity we promote as part of our community. At the cornerstone of our being, we believe in unity, that we are joined together, looking after one another, all through the love of Jesus Christ. If you don't feel this connection in your life, I am reaching out to you today.

Why is this important? This isn't just a religious journey and conversation. It's vital for us as humans. I want to share some basic statistics, so you understand the gravity. Loneliness is a health crisis in Western society today, surpassing the damage caused by inactivity, obesity, air pollution, and even smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Since 2003, the average time an American adult spends alone has increased by 24 hours a month. So now, you're isolated for an entire extra day each month compared to 2003. At the same time, you're also losing 20 hours every month that you could have spent with friends. That's two full days of reduced social connectivity for each of us, on average, every month in the United States.

If you think this only affects older folks, think again. The social time for young adults and teens has plummeted by 70%. While older individuals might be losing two days, our youth are experiencing even more significant disconnection.

On the topic of close friendships, there's a general measurement to gauge one's social health. If you have more than three close friends, you're socially well-connected. However, if it's three or fewer, you're entering a danger zone. In 1999, 25% of the population was in this zone. By 2020, that number had risen to 50%. That means half of us are treading in this so-called "danger zone."

But there's more concerning news. It's not just our mental well-being at stake, but our physical health too. Loneliness has been linked to a 29% increase in the risk of heart disease, a 32% increase in the chance of a stroke, a 50% heightened risk of dementia in older age, and an alarming 60% increased risk of premature death.

All by not having a connection. You know, like why is this what's going on? Well, if just in case you think it's only some people in church or philosophy that talk about this, consider the US Surgeon General. He states that our epidemic of loneliness and isolation has been an under-appreciated public health crisis that has harmed both individual and societal health. Our relationships are a source of our healing and well-being hiding in plain sight. One can help us, and by helping us, can lead us to live healthier, more fulfilled, and more productive lives simply by connecting.

So, we are 100% on therapy in this church and on counselors in this church. We have them as a part of our body. They are, get this, overworked, trying to help people get well. When you call crisis lines, you're being put on hold. There's just that much happening. And you might ask, "Well, what's happening to us as a society?" In the past few decades, we have lived through a dramatic pace of change. We move more, we change jobs more, and we live with technology that has profoundly changed how we interact and talk to each other. And it's detrimental. This is our life.

Have I sufficiently depressed you yet? This is our reality. And so, where's this coming from? Right, we created a society that doesn't fit us. We've created structure and things and interaction that doesn't fit us. Then what is "us"? Right? There are agnostics and atheists that we talk to and interact with. I love interacting with them. Why? Because we talk about, are there any signals that we are like God? Are there signals that God is with us? Are there signals that what was written in the Bible represents what we do today? And I think this is one of those signals.

I want to take you back to Genesis, to the beginning of how we were created. I want to say it in a way that's hopefully 21st century so you will remember it. If we go back to Genesis chapters one, two, and three, to the creation of the world, I want you to imagine this scene. So God, being in the universe, walking around, says, "Hey, come, Jesus, come, Holy Spirit. I want to talk to you. I've got this idea. Hear me out. I want to create this thing called Earth. And then I want to create these things called human beings. And I want to put them on that Earth. And I want to make them like us." Jesus asks, "Well, what would 'like us' mean? What would they do? What would they be capable of? How would they interact?" God replies, "Great question. They'll have the power to be creative. They'll have the power to create life. They'll also have the desire to be with one another. They'll have the desire to be in unity and community." Why do you think I'm saying that God put that desire in us? Because that is a part of what God is. All throughout the Old Testament, we are amazed at how many mistakes humankind is making. And yet, it's said that God had a desire for His people. God rearranged things to dwell with the people that he placed in us. It is something that can only be satisfied through our relationship with God and each other that God has in each and every one of us.

So now we're creating a society that doesn't promote connectivity. A society that now is destroying that same person.

That's what the data says. That's what our lives are becoming: something that is disconnected from each other, disconnected from the life that God wanted us to have.

He said, "Well, why are you seeing that in John?" Great question. All right. When we look at John versus the Gospels, and we pointed that out, what do we remember? As we walked through John, there were some differences in John versus the Synoptic Gospels. The other gospels talked about these majestic things. And John, right around two thirds of the way through his writing, makes a dramatic shift.

John goes from promoting miracles just like everyone else. He goes from talking about how Jesus wants justice, just like everyone else, and how Jesus invites those on the perimeter and draws them in just like everyone else. And then in chapter 13, he introduces himself as the one Jesus loves. He introduces himself as the one that Jesus loves under this guise. He says, as he's sitting next to Jesus at the supper, "I am the one who is loved."

What has happened before then? This great majestic God, who has shown all these miracles, kneels down and washes the disciples' feet. There could not be, at that time, a more human humble activity than to wash those that are supposed to serve you, to serve them in such a profound way.

And then, at that moment, John sees, hears, and experiences what he needs in order to accept what he would consider a Messiah. A Messiah that's powerful? Yes. A Messiah that is wise? Yes. But for John, it is a Messiah that loves, that loves profoundly.

And John is not some extravagant guy. What do we know about John? We know three things about him. We know John hung out with Jesus. We know John hung out with Peter. Pastor Tracy said, "Hey, it seems like John is always with Peter. Listen to what he's saying to Jesus. Right? When he goes fishing, John is there. When Peter goes to the tomb, John is there." So, John hangs out with Peter. We also know that John is with the women at the cross. And then the last thing: he wrote this book.

He's not an extravagant, unique person, but John never wants to be alone. Who doesn't want to be alone? Someone who's lonely. Someone who needs and has been abandoned. That is our friend, John.

And when John closes the book he wrote, which is only one of the four things he's known for, he says, "This is the testimony of this disciple, which I have written. And we know this, that my testimony is true." A person who once existed on a scale of loneliness had a relationship, by hanging out with Jesus, that moved him from this poignant moment and point of being alone, all the way over to being connected and loved and calling himself beloved.

Why is that important?

Because some of those people are you, that are also on this spectrum scale of feeling alone. You've been isolated by yourself, created by a society that convinces all of us that we should be like the lone ranger. They tell us, "You can do it yourself. Embrace rugged individualism, be self-made, pulling yourself up by your bootstraps, all by yourself."

But God said, "No, you can't."

You can't.

John is in the same place as he comes to the conclusion of his book. He states, "No, you can't." He mentions that if the world had written all the things that Jesus had done, it would be the largest book in the world. Currently, the largest book in the world is 1.3 million words. The Bible is about 800,000 words. Yet, he concludes with, "I'll be brief. This is what's important to me."

God is good. God is great. God loves to be. Does anybody need that? Do you need to know? Yes, God is powerful. He can win my battles. God is great. There's no mountain that we can't

conquer together. But at some point, we must remember we have been created in the image of God, and we need to know we're loved.

So, if that describes you today, if you're at a phase in your life where you might be feeling isolated and alone, I invite you not just to join us as part of this online community, but also to engage in all the different things we do to communicate the word to you. But most importantly, I want you to grow your faith. I want you to enhance your communication and meditation with God. I want you to expand your circle, to reach out to more than just one or two people. I desire for your quiver to be full of friends, for your time with friends to surpass the time you spend worrying about work. I recognize I might be asking for the impossible, but I am genuinely concerned about you.

Just as John was trying to convey when he said, "I am the one Jesus loves." He wasn't excluding you from saying the same. Peter could have said, "I am the one Jesus loves," and mean it. Truly mean it.

Do this simple act for me. Touch the person next to you on the shoulder, elbow, or wherever you're comfortable. I'd like for you to pray this prayer with me for them: "God, I thank you for my brother and sister sitting next to me. I pray that as you touch their lives, you'll be a constant companion through Your Holy Spirit and through your people on earth. That they will never feel alone. That they, like John, will consider themselves as the one Jesus loves. Amen."

Hopefully, you've taken something away from this.