

Livin' the Life

Introduction, part 1

John 20:30-31

We are starting a new series in the Gospel of John today, "Livin' the Life." Today I want to give you an overview of John then next week Matt will start with 1:1-5. We will move slowly through the first chapter, then pick up the pace through the rest of the gospel. John, like the other gospels, writes a theological biography of Jesus but John is unique among the others. John gives us his purpose for writing at the end of the gospel, 20:30-31, telling us that he chose the most pertinent material from the life of Jesus so that first, we would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Then, secondly, that by believing we may have life in his name.

First, the Gospel of John is written that we would believe in the person and work of Jesus. John is a reliable witness to write this gospel because Jesus did many miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples. When John wrote, he presented events in the life and ministry of Jesus as evidence to convince us to believe in Jesus. The gospel can be divided into five sections. The first section is the prologue (1:1-18) which is an introduction like all the gospels give. But instead of introducing Jesus at his birth, John introduces Jesus from eternity past, because Jesus has always existed. "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were made through him (1:1-3)." This Jesus is more than a mere human but is God himself, the Creator of all things. John sought the most appropriate, all encompassing expression for Jesus and he came up with "the Word." In the Old Testament God's word centers around three things: God's word creates, God's word reveals God's person and work, and God's word saves. "The Word" best sums up Jesus because he is the Creator, he reveals both God the Father and God the Son, and he is the one who saves! So we have already read that he is the Creator. We also read that if you have seen Jesus, you have seen God the Father (14:9) and Thomas declares that Jesus is Lord and God (20:28). And Jesus comes as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (1:29)." John wants us to see from the start that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have eternal life in his name!

In the next section, Jesus is manifested to Israel (1:19-12). In these chapters, we read about seven miraculous signs Jesus performed that point to a greater spiritual reality, the glory of the Son of God who offers eternal life. John's gospel is written like a legal document, laying out the evidence to the jury and demanding a verdict - believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing have life. In the first sign, Jesus turns water into wine. Many people only saw the miracle but his disciples saw his glory in the sign and believed in him (2:1-11). Turning water into wine was for more than having a good time. It's a sign that points to a greater spiritual reality, the old era is passing away and Jesus is ushering in the Messianic age. The last miraculous sign in this section is Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Many put their faith in him but others went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus did (11:1-46). This highlights the growing hostility of the Jewish leaders toward Jesus. This act of love toward a friend, seals his fate with the Pharisees who from that day forward plan to kill him (11:53). Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead so that we would see that he is "the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in him though he dies, yet he shall live, that is, he shall never die (11:25-26)."

In the third section, Jesus is manifested to His disciples (13-17). Jesus knew his hour had come to depart and return to his Father (13:1) so he invests his time teaching his disciples to prepare them for his departure. Among other things, he teaches them that loving one another by serving one another will demonstrate to the world that they are his disciples (13:34-35). And that after his death, his disciples will no longer be identified by following him around but by abiding in Jesus and his word and thus he will abide in them. This mutual abiding is a relational intimacy with Jesus which sustains and nourishes this eternal life we have, producing fruit and obedience and joy (15:1-7).

The next section covers Jesus' Suffering and Glory (18-20), and describes the glory of his crucifixion, death, and resurrection. In his death, he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (19:34). We often think of glory as some spectacular visionary scene or some extraordinary in view of creation that leaves us in awe but God displays his glory in an instrument of torture, cruel and gruesome, because it most clearly displays His love and goodness toward sinful humanity. After Jesus' resurrection, John gives his own version of the great commission, "as the Father sent me so I send you (20:21)." When Thomas is convinced that Jesus rose from the dead, he gives one of the clearest confessions of faith, "My Lord and My God (20:28)," thus believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

The fifth section is as an epilogue, recording Jesus' final resurrection appearance to the disciples and compares the role of Peter and John (21). The gospel of John is written that we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and secondly, the Gospel of John is written that we would have eternal life in Jesus.

Second, the Gospel of John is written that we would have eternal life in Jesus. The second reason John wrote is that "by believing, we have life in his name (20:31). Life in the Gospel of John is synonymous with eternal life. We find the clearest explanation of eternal life in 3:16-18. Here, we find that God loves the world. God's love is not because we are lovable but despite our unlovableness. God's love is often described as the basis of our worthiness and lovableness. But the whole of the bible points in the opposite direction, God loves us despite unloveliness. When someone communicates their love for another it normally exalts the one loved. My love for Karen says more about her than my enduring/actual love for her. It says much about her qualities that compels and attracts my love for her. But the bible says just the opposite, that God's love for humanity says more about his character and love than us. The bible describes us as repulsive to a holy and righteous God because we are detestable, reprehensible. Despite everything about us that repels God, God loves us. The cross is the ultimate display of his love for us. The greatest sacrifice for our greatest need. The purpose of his dying is that "whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life (3:16)." To help us understand everlasting life, he contrasts it with perish; eternal life is the opposite of perishing. We will perish unless we believe and receive eternal life. Eternal life is knowing Jesus the Son and God the Father (17:3). Eternal life is based solely upon the knowledge of the true God. It is the resurrection life, the life of the age to come, the very life of God (1 Jn 1:4). It is not something we have by nature, something we can get from this life but only through Jesus Christ, through the words of Christ (6:68), and this life is available to us now (5:24) but goes for eternity. Eternity exists for us to relish in the riches of God's grace found in believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Eph 2:7).