

Livin' the Life
John's Witness to Jesus, part 6
John 1:19-34
October 29, 2017

We are in our series in the Gospel of John, "Livin' the Life" looking at what life in Jesus means for us today. John wrote to convince us to believe in Jesus for eternal life and to strengthen the faith of those who already believe in Jesus. Today we moving from the prologue, the introduction, to the body of the gospel looking at John the Baptist's Witness to Jesus in 1:19-34.

Big Idea – John the Baptist points our attention to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.

John's Relationship to the Jesus (vs. 19-28)

This is John the Baptists testimony (19). John has gathered a following by preaching and baptizing in the Jordan river (28), raising the interest of the Jewish officials who kept an eye on the religious landscape. The Old Testament promised the coming of the Christ, the Messiah, who would deliver Israel so there were expectations of this Messianic figure appearing. So, when someone gathered a following they were investigated by something like the religious police. The first question they ask John is, "who are you (19)?" Knowing what they were asking, John makes it very clear, "I am not the Christ (20)." Then ask him more questions, "are you Elijah," the one to come before the Messiah? John denies this also, "I am not." Then are you the Prophet Moses foretold would come to speak God's word to us? Again, he says "no (21)." Frustrated and running out of options, they ask, "Who are you? We need to tell those who sent us something about you! Who do you say you are (22)?" His answer was, my identity is insignificant, "I am just a voice in the spiritual wasteland, crying out, make straight the way of the Lord as the Old Testament prophet Isaiah said (23)." He is referring to a time in Israel's history when the prophet Isaiah called Israel to repent, that is, to turn from their sin and spiritual apathy and return to the Lord. In the same way, John the Baptist is calling Israel to repent of their sin and spiritual apathy and return to God in the flesh, Jesus. John the Baptist is not driven by titles, identity, or personal significance, but is instead driven to make sure our attention is on Jesus, "look to Jesus, not me." I am just the messenger, pointing people to Jesus.

Well this created even more questioning by this delegation. If you are just a voice, then why are you baptizing people if you have no credentials (25)? John deflects attention away from himself again, "my baptism calls people to repent to prepare them for the Christ." "But more important than my baptism is that in your midst is someone you do not even recognize. I am nothing compared to him, I am not even worthy to tie the straps of his sandals (26-27)." The fact that God sent John with a message of repentance and that they do not recognize their Messiah tells us something of the spiritual condition of Israel. Again, John keeps us focused on Jesus. In the culture of his day, tying or untying someone's leather sandals was considered too demeaning even to the lowest of slaves. His point is that compared to Jesus, I am less than a slave. In our culture, which exalts the importance of self-worth and self-love as necessary for a positive self-image, John says I am not worthy of Jesus. But we often hear that God loves you so much that he died for you! His love demonstrates your worth as a person! But the bible teaches just the opposite about the love of God. God's love is so great because despite our rebellion against God, he still loves us so much that he sacrificed his Son to pay the penalty for our sin and reconcile us to himself. Contrary to popular opinion, God's love says less about human worth and more about the worth of his great love.

John's Witness to Jesus (vs. 29-34)

The next day, "John sees Jesus coming toward him and says, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (29)" introducing Jesus as the Sacrificial Lamb who will die for the sins of the world. The theme of a sacrificial lamb fills the Old Testament but probably the most prominent image comes from the Exodus. Israel had been enslaved to Egypt for 430 years when God demands that Pharaoh let Israel, God's firstborn son, go but he refused. As acts of divine judgement, God brought six plagues upon Egypt to convince Pharaoh to let Israel go, but each time he refused. With the last and greatest plague, God said he would kill every firstborn son in Egypt, including Pharaoh's

son, unless he let Israel go. To protect every firstborn son in Israel, God told them to slaughter a spotless lamb and smear its blood above their doorposts. When the angel of death came in judgment across Egypt every firstborn son in Egypt died, including Pharaoh's firstborn son, but every firstborn son in Israel was spared because they trusted God by smearing the blood across their doorposts. Pharaoh finally let Israel go but later changed his mind and went after them with his army. As Pharaoh's army chased Israel down, God parted the Red Sea so his people could walk through on dry land but when Pharaoh's army followed, the water came crashing down and killed the whole army. This is the event in the OLD Testament that points to Jesus as the greater sacrificial Lamb, sacrificed for the sins of the world. Jesus, the Eternal Son of God chose to limit himself by taking on human nature to rescue humanity in rebellion against God (Phil 2:6-10). God took on humanity to take away human sin (1 Pe 1:18-20).

Take Aways . . .

- Do you need to return to the Lord?
- Have you trusted Jesus, the Lamb of God who paid for your sin?
- Do you look for opportunities to point others to Jesus?

Questions for Life Groups:

1. Tell us about an introduction you remember that was memorable.
2. The term "the Jews" is used repeatedly in John for the religious leaders who were antagonistic toward John and then Jesus. Why do you think they were antagonistic?
3. What does it mean to repent? How are repentance and faith connected?
4. Is repentance a regular part of your life with God?
5. Do you ever ask God to show you your sin so that you can repent of it?
6. Have you ever not wanted to repent of a sin? What can you do if you are in this situation?
7. Does God's love tell us more about the nature of His love or human worth? Do you agree with what David said about this issue?
8. John deflects attention from himself to Jesus in this passage. How can we do the same?
9. Tell us of a time you remember pointing someone to Jesus.
10. Who in your life does God want you to be a witness?
11. What steps can you take to be a witness to this person this week?

