

## ***Testimonies That You May Believe and Have Life in Christ***

John 20:30-31

The Gospel of John Sermon Series

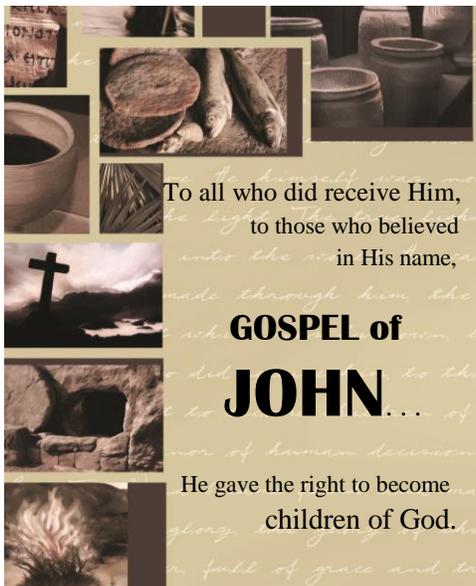
Kenwood Baptist Church

Pastor David Palmer

February 2, 2014

**TEXT:** John 20:30-31

This morning we begin our spring New Testament series at Kenwood as we turn our attention to the Person and work of our Lord Jesus. We will be engaged by the presentation of Jesus' life and ministry in the Gospel of John. By the end of the first part of this series, we will be



celebrating Easter together. In the second part of this series, we will look back at the Gospel of John at the *I AM* statements of Jesus in this precious Gospel. This series builds on the series we conducted in Genesis where the theme was *God Builds a Family of Faith*. In the Gospel of John, we will look at how by receiving Christ we become part of God's family, children by virtue of adoption into His family. John 1:12 says:

*"To all who did receive Him, to those who believe in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."*

This is our testimony of faith. We will look with this image in mind. The central image is the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ is the defining symbol of Christian faith, and inside this cross there are images that we will unpack as we move through the narrative of John's Gospel. We want to begin this series by looking at the ending of John's Gospel, the reason for which he wrote this work. We place ourselves into the hands of another person, the author of the Gospel of John, to see where he is taking us. What does John hope to give us in the scope of his work? How will reading, studying, and listening to this portion of Scripture actually affect us? What should we expect or pray for from this series? What I want to do this morning is to look at John's direct answer to that question so that we can be praying and expecting these consequences. We want to be looking for them together.

We begin with this short, but very important passage, John 20:30-31. John tells in these verses that:

*“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book.”*

Jesus did an extraordinary number of deeds that were seen, signs of symbolic actions of revealing His glory, His identity, His power. These were done in the presence of His disciples, including John himself. John tells us that though Jesus did many signs, many of them are not included in this book. John has not included additional material that we know from the other canonical Gospels: the tremendous number of deeds, teachings, discourses, revelations of His person, that Jesus did. If you read Matthew, Mark, and Luke, you come to John, and you find that many of the stories and teachings of Jesus in those Gospels are not in John. Also, he tells us very clearly that there is a great deal of material that is not included in John. We read in John 21:25, right at the very end of this book:

*“Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.”*

Get your mind and heart around that statement.

Our daughter just returned from Washington DC, and she said, “Dad, I was on the steps of the Library of Congress, but it was closed.” I could sense her great disappointment. I would have



felt the same way. For one visual image of a vast amount of material, let's go inside the Library of Congress for just a moment. The Library of Congress is our national library. This is the beautiful reading room of the Library of Congress which contains 32,000,000 cataloged books. Those books are in 470 languages. We get excited around here that we have 18 native languages in our church. We have room to grow! The Library of

Congress has more than 61,000,000 manuscripts, including the rough draft of the Declaration of Independence and an original complete Gutenberg Bible. The Library of Congress shelves are 838 miles long, 1400 km. A study done by Peter Lyman in year 2000 says that the digital value of the books of the Library of Congress is 10 terabytes. In whatever system of value you operate, in miles or in kilometers, if you're terabyte thinker, this is a lot of material. Every business day, 22,000 books, new items, arrive, and John tells us that you are going to need thousands of these institutions to hold on to what should be said and need be said about what Jesus did.

There is a figure at the center of the Gospel of John, the Person of Jesus, that is so significant, so earth shattering, heaven rending, that He demands our full attention. We begin now to

consider this Person. In just one generation of biblical scholarship, there were 3120 academic books written on just the Gospel of John. The Person of Christ is so significant that John says the world itself is not a large enough library to say all that must be said.

John tells us that he made some decisions. He tells us, "Though the world is not large enough to contain all that should be said, I have selected a few items and placed them in this Book." These items that you will read, that we will hear and study together, I will seek with all my heart to proclaim to you. These items are written here in this Book, a standard length, a 32 foot scroll, a manageable amount of time, it takes about two hours to read through in its entirety, maybe a little longer to listen through, but John says, "I picked these items and I placed them inside this Book." John goes on to tell us that he has a very clear purpose, which is, then, our purpose in reading it. John hopes by our reading and listening to this work that two things will happen. These will be my prayer for Kenwood Baptist Church over the next several weeks, and I want you to pray that with me. I'm hoping for two things to happen.

The first hope John has is that some people will be converted; some people will change from a lack of belief in Christ to belief in Christ. He says in John 20:31:

***"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."***

He says, "I wrote these things down that some would come to the saving knowledge that Jesus is in fact the promised Messiah, Son of the living God." He hopes to convince us through this presentation of that great confession of faith. The words *Jesus* and *Christ* are put together 265 times in the New Testament. There are no other documents in the ancient world where these two words are set together. Messiah, or Christ, is a known and hoped for part of the hope of Israel in the Scriptures, but it is only in the New Testament that we find people saying, "The Messiah has been found; He has come, and He is Jesus of Nazareth." John says: "If you read my book then I'm hoping that some of you will be converted to faith, to become a Christian." Some people, both ancient and modern, think, "So, what's the big deal to say that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah? Why is that important?"

Let me give you two people who think it's radically unimportant: one really old; one relatively young. An old person who thought this is not important was Celsus, a second century Roman writer. Celsus said:

*"I wonder that Christians and Jews argue so foolishly with one another – their contest over whether Jesus was or was not the Messiah reminding me rather of the proverb about the shadow of a donkey."*

In other words, "Who cares?" Celsus continues by saying:

“In fact, there is really nothing of significance in their dispute: both maintain the quite nonsensical notion that a divine Savior was prophesied long ago and would come to dwell among men. All they disagree on is whether He has come or not.”

In his view, it is an irrelevant discussion. A modern person who finds this equally unimportant is the British scientist, Richard Dawkins. Richard Dawkins believes that conversion is an impossible thing, and Dawkins, the wily British scientist, said:

“There is no such thing as a Christian child: only a child of Christian parents.”

What Dawkins means by this is that the only way someone becomes a Christian is if you grow up in a Christian house, and you become a Christian by osmosis or genetics. No one really becomes a Christian; you just grow up as a Christian.

John would radically disagree with both of these people. John would say conversion as possible, and it does happen. John would say that the hope of a Messiah is a central tenet of biblical faith. Psalm 2:7,8 says:

*“I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of Me, and I will make the nations Your inheritance, the ends of the earth Your possession.’”*

Isaiah 11:10 promises a time when:

*“In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to Him, and His place of rest will be glorious.”*

All nations will stream to Him. The synagogue prayer from the temple liturgy in the time of Jesus, known as *The Prayer* in Judaism, is prayed every day, three times a day, 365 days a year. The opening words of this prayer are:

“Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God and God of our fathers,  
God of Abraham, Isaac, and God of Jacob,  
The great, mighty, and awesome God, the most high God,  
Who does loving kindness and art the Creator of all things,  
Who remembers the faithfulness of our ancestors and  
Who will bring a redeemer to their children’s children for Thy name’s sake in love.”

This is prayed a thousand times a year! “No,” Celsus, “this is actually a really important idea, that Jesus is the Messiah,” and, “No, Dawkins, people actually do to convert and become Christians.”

C.S. Lewis, in his work, *The Screwtape Letters*, a very creative work where he has the devil and a young demonic apprentice trying to take care to avoid losses for their kingdom, has a line where the devil says:

"A young man who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful of his reading. There are traps everywhere - Bibles laid open, millions of surprises - . . . God is, if I may say it, very unscrupulous."

There was a man named John in a prison in Slovakia where Bibles were regularly distributed. One day, he came to the counselor, and he said, "I have wonderful news for you. I have accepted Christ." The counselor said, "Praise God! How did this happen?" He said, "Well, I'm a little embarrassed to tell you, but if you insist . . ."

"The first time you came here and brought Bibles for us, I took one right away. When I held a copy of the New Testament in my hands, and felt the pages, they were so crisp... The very first thought came to my mind: "This is a great paper to roll my own cigarettes. Since I had plenty of tobacco in my cell, I just needed some nice and crispy paper to make my own cigarettes.

"When I got that first New Testament, I literally started to tear off the first pages from the book of Matthew, one-by-one. I had gone through several pages a day. I enjoyed getting such a fine paper for free. As I licked, rolled, and smoked the cigarettes, I didn't pay any attention to the words that were in these pages. After several weeks, I came to the Gospel of John.

"With a little curiosity, because my name is John, I wondered what John could write about thousands years ago. I started to read the first chapter. I read that: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God,*" and so on. I had enjoyed reading; it was a pretty philosophical thought. After I read the first chapter, I just continued. I came to chapter three, where I read: "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*"

"I have never ever in my life heard, read, or even considered thoughts about God, Christ, salvation, heaven and hell. The words of John kept my mind busy - it sounded like nice philosophy. After several days it started to puzzle me. Specially, when I came to the part where Jesus met this, what's his name, Nicodemus!

"There were a few words I read over and over, like: '*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*' I could not understand what these words mean. I stopped tearing pages off and continued to read, occasionally returning to previously read passages. By the time I came to the end of the Gospel of John, it was very clear to me what I had to do. Sometimes I am ashamed;

sometimes I laugh that I had to, literally, smoke through the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, and Luke before I accepted Christ."

Will you pray with me that some people will be converted through this series? Really pray for that? John says if that happens, then the second thing will happen.

The second thing that John says will happen is in the second half of John 20:31:

*"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, **and that by believing you may have life in His name.**"*

He says, "If you read my book, you will come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and you will have life in His name." The second thing that will happen is that you and I will begin to experience new life, a real new kind of life: new affections, new thoughts, new patterns of behavior, new freedom from sin. It will start to happen to you as we take in the words and Person of Jesus as John presents them.

I want to give you a couple of testimonies to this effect. One is from George Beasley Murray, a British pastor. Beasley Murray says:

"To study John with integrity, openness and with expectation of the guidance of the Spirit should be a spiritual adventure for anyone. It will lead the reader to a more profound understanding of Him of whom it tells – Jesus, the Christ, the incarnate Son of God, Word of God, Son of Man, and Savior of the World; and if the purpose of its composition is fulfilled in Him, it will lead to a deeper faith in and knowledge of that same Jesus, and a more adequate witness to Him before the world."

Dale Bruner, who just finished a 1400 page commentary on John, was Alex Aronis' Sunday school teacher. Dale Bruner came to faith through Henrietta Mears' adult Sunday school class. A whole generation of Christian leaders, such as Bill Bright, was raised up from this adult Sunday school class. Bruner says after finishing this book on John, that he worked on for many, many years, said:

"The main reality in life and the most important fact of history is Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal Son of God, who became a real human being in and for the whole world. I believe that Jesus' most particular gifts to humanity were, at the conclusion of His incomparable teaching and healing ministry, those gifts given on a single great weekend just outside Jerusalem in the middle of the first century of our era – His death and His resurrection. Jesus' death and resurrection gave, and in proclamation they continue to give, His believers the plenary forgiveness of their sins, the assurance of death's conquest, the free gift of the Holy Spirit for seeking to live in conformity with the nonviolent and truthful Jesus, free access to the reality of God the Father, and a world

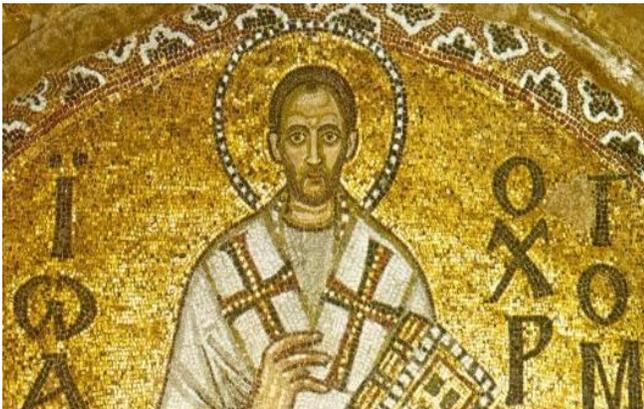
mission in our vocations.”

What gives new life in Christ? How is this purpose accomplished, these two great objectives of conversion and new life? John picks a set of testimonies to show us. In Deuteronomy 19:15 it says:

*“One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”*

The organizing structure of John's Gospel is a series of testimonies to the truth of Jesus' Person and claims. John will walk us through these testimonies, and we will walk through them together as a church family. Next Sunday, we will look at John's own testimony. How does John the evangelist step into the narrative and speak his own testimony? We'll look at the testimony of John the Baptist, the testimony of Mary, of Nicodemus, of a Samaritan woman, of a man born blind, and of the crowds. We'll also look at God the Father's own testimony to the Son. We'll look at the Holy Spirit's testimony of the Son. We'll look at the Scripture's testimony to the Son, until we reach Easter Sunday, and we'll hear Mary Magdalene and Thomas' testimony to the Person and glory of Jesus Christ.

This morning I want you to pray with me for conversions here. Pray for new life in our church and in our family and in your own heart, new life in Christ. Raise your expectations and anticipations of hearing the Word of the living God in this clear and breathtaking picture of Jesus Christ. I'm going to have a few reading companions in the study myself: Beasley Murray will be one; Dale Bruner will be another; and the last reading companion that I'm going to be



using is an early Christian, John Chrysostom, who had a great nickname. His name is John, and his nickname was Chrysostom, which in Greek means *golden mouth*, a pretty high compliment for preacher. They called him *Golden Mouth* because he spoke so powerfully about the Person of Christ. John Chrysostom was the leader of the church in Constantinople in the fourth century. Thankfully, we have a series of 88 sermons of John Chrysostom on

John. Our series is only to be about 20; his was 88.

John Chrysostom's opening invitation to hear the Gospel of John contemporary relevance. He ministered in a pastoral context. Constantinople was like the New York City of his world, and people were going mad with other forms of entertainment and vice in their society. He called

everyone to listen to the Word of God. Listen to Chrysostom's opening words:

“They that are spectators of the games, when they have learned that a distinguished athlete and winner of crowns is come from any quarter, run all together to view his wrestling, and all his skill and strength; and you may see the whole stadium of many ten thousands, all there straining their eyes both of body and mind, that nothing of what is done may escape them.

“Other people, if a musician comes among them, leave all they have in hand, which often is necessary and pressing business, mount the steps and listen attentively to the words and the accompaniment to the song. Others, when they are skilled at public speaking, do the same. They fill the stadiums, and the audience claps their hands.”

Then he asks this:

“If it is the case of gifted speakers, talented musicians and athletes, that people sit and stream in to pay close attention, what zeal, what earnestness, should you and I have to listen when it is no musician, or debater, or athlete, but when a man comes speaking from heaven with a voice of thunder. What is wonderful is that this sound of his voice, great as it is, is neither harsh nor unpleasant, but sweeter and more delightful than all harmony of music, with more skill to soothe, and besides all this, most holy, most tremendous, and that if we were to listen with ready mind to receive, we would listen and no longer dwell just on earth, but, as it were, in heaven. For this man coming forward is the son of thunder, the beloved of Christ, John, the son of Zebedee, who drank the cup with Christ, who lay upon his chest. He comes forward, not as an actor, not hiding his head with a mask, not mounting a platform, not striking the stage with his foot, nor dressed with the apparel of gold, but he enters with a robe of having put on Christ; feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel, wearing a garment of truth. He utters a voice sweeter and more profitable than all. All heaven is his stage; his arena the habitable world; and his audience all mankind.”

That's an awesome way to start an 88 sermons series. Isn't that strikingly contemporary? John Chrysostom says, “Stream to give all your attention to this man who was with Christ, an eyewitness to His glory; who lay upon His chest in the Last Supper. Hear his words that you might believe and be converted, and that upon conversion you may have life in His name.”

Communion:

This is our invitation and our privilege to come to this table as we begin. This is not the table of Kenwood Baptist Church. It is the table of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, on the very night in which He was betrayed, took bread and broke it in the presence of His disciples, including John. He

said, "This is My body which is broken for you." Later in that meal, He took the cup and said, "This cup is the New Covenant in My blood." If you have believed in Christ, you are welcome at His table. If you have believed, then drink of the blood of the Son of God and eat of His flesh that you might have life in His name. Add your own life to this unbroken string of testimony of who He is today.

Heavenly Father, we come to You. We prepare our hearts now to receive Your broken body and shed blood. We ask, Lord God, now, in Your presence for these objectives, these purposes, to be realized, that some would come to meet You for the first time, and that all who have believed would find new life in Christ and add the testimony of their own lives to corroborate the truth of who You are. We ask Your blessing, and invite Your presence here.

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.