

TELLING JESUS

John 20:26-31

INTRODUCTION

- A. Have you ever wished that you had been a contemporary of Jesus? I don't mean giving up air conditioning and automobiles to walk around in sandals and sleep on a straw mat. But, *so far as your faith is concerned*, have you ever wished you had "been there"?
 - 1. That you could have walked and talked with Jesus?
 - 2. That, like John, you might have seen Him with your own eyes and heard Him with your own ears and touched Him with your hand (1 John 1:1)?
 - 3. That you had been able to sit around a fire with Him in the evenings and converse about spiritual matters?
 - 4. That you could have witnessed Him healing the sick and casting out demons and raising the dead?
- B. It is hard, 2000 years distant from Jesus, to live with the conviction and commitment needed to be His disciple. The passing of the years has dulled something of the urgency, the passion, required to follow closely in His steps. And so we tell ourselves that if only we had been there, seen His miracles, sat at His feet and heard His words—if only we had the advantages of John or Peter, we too could muster up the kind of faith they had.
 - 1. The idea that, had we been there, we might not have believed in Him *at all* hardly ever enters our minds. We *assume* that seeing Him would have been enough not only to make us believe but to make us believe deeply and unshakably and fanatically.
 - 2. I want to be like Peter, but could it be that I am more like Thomas, ... or Judas?
- C. But consider this. Most of those who *were* there, who saw Jesus with their own eyes and heard Him with their own ears did not become His disciples.
 - 1. The vast majority of those who met Jesus face to face went away angry or confused or, at least, unmoved.
 - 2. It is not just possible, it is probable that had we been alive when Jesus walked the earth the question we would wrestle with would not be how deeply to believe in him but whether to believe at all.

I. Faith does not always come by *Seeing*

A. Being a contemporary does not assure faith.

- 1. It surely didn't help most of the *religious leaders*.
 - a. These were people
 - i. who had been waiting for the Messiah their entire lifetimes.
 - ii. who knew the law of Moses; they were familiar with the prophets.
 - iii. who had lived in anticipation of God's sending the one who would "redeem Israel."
 - b. They were "there" when Jesus lived and worked.
 - i. They saw the results of His miracles firsthand.
 - ii. They heard the power of His preaching with their own ears.
 - iii. But they didn't recognize Him as the Messiah when He came; they still hated Him and succeeded eventually in killing Him.
- 2. Being a contemporary didn't help most of the *common people* who met Jesus.
 - a. It was possible to pass Jesus in the street and never know who He was.
 - b. It was possible, even, to eat His miraculous bread or feel His healing touch and still not believe that He was who He claimed to be.
 - c. Many of these very people, in the end, were shouting, "Crucify him!"
- 3. Being a contemporary wasn't all that much help even to his *disciples*.

- a. They still struggled to come to faith. For all the things they saw and heard, for all the miracles and words of truth, they still found it difficult to put their trust wholly in Jesus.
- b. At least one disciple was unmoved by the evidence of his eyes and ears.
 - i. Judas watched Jesus heal, walk on water and even raise a man back to life.
 - ii. He heard the truths which Jesus spoke, witnessed lives which He changed.
 - iii. Still, he remained a thief and a schemer and, finally, betrayed Jesus.

B. The Need for Eyes with which to See.

- 1. Seeing is not always believing.
 - a. Faith in Jesus requires something more than events to look at—it requires eyes with which to see.
 - b. Such eyes have very little to do with corneas and lenses and optic nerves.
 - i. They are eyes located in our souls.
 - aa. Eyes which are able to see spiritual things and discern the truth.
 - bb. Eyes which are thoughtful and hungry and tired of being blind.
- 2. Why is it that some people believe in Jesus and others do not?
 - a. It isn't because some were "there" and others were not.
 - b. It isn't because some saw great things and others only heard the reports.
 - c. It is because some are blind and long to see, while others see everything and remain blind.
 - d. Matthew 13:14-17

II. WHY JOHN WROTE A GOSPEL.

A. When John sat down to write a book about Jesus, he did so recognizing that his readers would not have been contemporaries of Jesus (30-60 years removed). They had not "been there," they had not met Jesus and heard Him speak and seen Him perform miracles. But John did not see that as an obstacle to faith.

- 1. The real obstacle was a blindness of the soul that kept people from believing, whether they saw Jesus in the flesh or only heard reports of Jesus from people like John. So, John wrote his book with that blindness in mind.
- 2. *How do you tell the story of Jesus in such a way that He steps out of the pages of a book and into the hearts of those who read the book?*

B. The Uniqueness of John's Telling of Jesus

- 1. John did not tell about Jesus like Paul did.
 - a. One of the things that is fascinating about Paul's story of Jesus is how little Paul tells us about the earthly ministry of Jesus.
 - b. For Paul, it was enough to confront people with the cross and resurrection, and the implication of those events for people in Corinth and Ephesus and Galatia.
 - c. But John wants to say more about the life of Jesus than that. There is something imbedded in the way Jesus lived—in the words He spoke, in the miracles He performed—that John understood to be important in leading people to faith.
 - i. And so John does not write like Paul—his book isn't a letter teaching Christians how to live out the cross and the empty tomb in daily lives.
 - ii. He writes a story about the life of Jesus in the belief that first, people have to see Jesus Christ for who He is and then they will be motivated to live under Christ's lordship.
- 2. And John did not tell about Jesus like Mark did.
 - a. Mark's story emphasized what it meant to *follow* Jesus, how to be His *disciple*.
 - b. You get the feeling that Mark is telling Jesus to people who have already come to faith . . . they just need to understand how to count the cost and walk their talk.

- c. But John is concerned with something more basic than that. His story of Jesus does not assume faith at all. He writes what he writes “*so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*” (**Jn 20:31**).

B. The Purpose of John’s Gospel—There are two issues John returns to repeatedly in his story of Jesus: 1) Jesus is God come to earth, and 2) Do we believe that truth?

1. John writes his story to show that Jesus is God in the flesh.
 - a. John begins right off with *his* understanding of Jesus: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. . . . No one has ever seen God, but God the one and only, who is at the Father’s side, has made Him known* (**Jn. 1:1, 18, NIV**).
 - b. In John’s story, Jesus makes more claims to divinity than in all the other gospels combined. His claims are shocking, bold, unmistakable. They are so daring that several times His listeners try to stone Him on the spot for daring to “make Himself equal with God,” *John 8:58-59; 10:30-31, 38-39*.
 - c. John is careful to present us with a series of “signs” which are intended to prove that someone who can do what Jesus does must be who Jesus claims to be.
2. John writes his story to help us see Jesus with the eyes of faith.
 - a. He doesn’t just fill page after page with as many events, as many memories, as he could dredge up from the past.
 - b. Raw events on paper would be even less effective in producing faith than those same events acted out by Jesus in front of His skeptical and blind audiences.
 - c. What John intends to do with his book is tell the story of Jesus *as interpreted through his own believing eyes*.

C. The need for an “interpreted life”

1. John carefully *selects* events which show people struggling toward faith (or rushing headlong into rejection).
 - a. We meet in this book a whole cast of characters who saw everything Jesus did and yet saw nothing: the religious leaders, the crowds, Judas.
 - b. And we meet also some special individuals who saw Jesus and had eyes to *really* see: Nicodemus, a woman by a well, a blind man.
 - c. And, above all, we see Jesus through the eyes of John who witnessed everything first hand, who bears witness that Jesus is the Christ and who helps us see Jesus through the eyes of faith.
2. John is constantly *commenting* on those events, leading his readers to see them as he saw them, to understand them as he understood them, and to respond to them as he himself responded.

CLOSING

- A. It is comforting to think that, had we been contemporaries of Christ, *we* would have been wise enough to see Him for what He was and become His disciples— move over John and Peter and Philip, *we* have arrived!
 1. The truth is that we would have been as blind as the crowds and, in all likelihood, would have been too busy or too shocked or too dense to become His disciples.
- B. Instead, we have the great privilege of seeing Jesus through the eyes of John, of watching as he warns us to look carefully, of witnessing events which John presents in such a way that we are more likely to really see, truly understand, and fully believe.
- C. *Tell Me the Story of Jesus*