

John 1:6-13 Sermon - August 2019

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It is said that you can never, by preaching, exhaust a scripture. You can never preach on a passage so much that you've drained all meaning from it. You can't come to a point where there is nothing more to be said on the topic.

That is definitely true, and passages like these here in John remind you just how true that is. Each verse could have a sermon series preached, and you would still have to skip the finer details. Why? Because this is the Gospel, this is the truth of God, and His Son, and our sin, and our salvation, and His glory. It's all the way from Genesis to Revelation.

Mark's gospel begins with the ministry of Jesus as an adult. Matthew begins at the birth of Jesus, and goes back to Abraham with the genealogy. Luke begins before the birth of Jesus, and his genealogy traces back to Adam.

But John, here in his gospel account begins at the creation of the universe. Back in verse 1 we start with "1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" John starts with Jesus as the eternally begotten Son of God. Jesus, present with the Father and the Holy Spirit at the beginning of time. Jesus, Whom through all things were made.

Andrew preached on the first 5 verses of John, where we have Jesus as the Word and the Life and the Light. We continue that tonight on verses 6-13, but from verse 6 we have this apparent sudden shift from Jesus to John the Baptist.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

This man, John, referred to here is the person we know as John the Baptist. He has the title John the Baptist because that was a distinctive of his ministry, he would baptise people in the Jordan river for their repentance of sins.

John the Baptist was the greatest prophet as he was the one to prepare the way for the Christ. He is mentioned in the scriptures, and is prophesied in the Old testament.

Malachi 3:1

3 "I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty.

He stands in the place of Elijah;

Malachi 4:5

5 "See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes.

Jesus Himself confirms this about John. We read in matthew chapter 11

9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written:

*"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you."*

And verse 13

13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.

Jesus also says this about John in verse 11:

11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist;

And John the Baptist's birth was announced to his own father by an angel as we read in Luke 1

13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. 16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

19 The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news."

John's birth was indeed a miracle, born to parents well past child bearing years. John was a great and mighty preacher. He drew many people to him, and called his people to repentance. But for all of his greatness, he was also a true model of a godly minister, a godly preacher.

John recognises his lowly position compared to Jesus - he is not fit to stop and untie Jesus' sandals.

John 1:27

27 He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

But John was sent from God for a special purpose. His role was to prepare God's people for the appearance of the Christ. Of the Life and Light and Word.

7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.

The gospel author turns back to John's connection to Jesus, and the ministry John has. John is a witness to the message of the gospel. But John is not witnessing to report on the news, he's witnessing about the message so that you might believe.

This is the purpose of preaching - to believe in the gospel. Yes, there are times when a topical series is preached, or practical application is given to believers. But the heart of all preaching, rather the foundation, if you will, is the gospel. Without the preaching of the gospel there can be no belief in the good news. And no salvation.

As we read in Romans chapter 10:

13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

And in verse 15:

15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

This is why it was important that John was sent of God. The Greek word is *apostello*, where we get the word *Apostle*. In Latin it is *missio*, and from this we get the word *mission* and *missionary*. This is a fundamental requirement of all preachers - to be sent of God.

What is the alternative to being sent of God? It is when someone goes out for their own fame or wealth. It's when someone preaches or plants a church to build up their own esteem, not God's. That's not why John was preaching. In fact, John's honest preaching of God's law to King Herod ended up costing him his life. Because he spoke God's truth to Herod, he was executed, beheaded.

So even here in these verses tonight, we not only have the gospel presented to us, but also a model for a godly preacher and minister.

7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.

The word here for believe, *pisteo* in the Greek, has 3 meanings:
To believe (ascent to), to trust, to have faith.

So, we see that the witness to the gospel is not so that we simply accept the truth of the account, it's so we go further and trust and have faith in the gospel.

8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

The writer of the gospel again makes this distinction between Jesus and John the Baptist. The important point is that Jesus as the light is the ultimate, authoritative light. And there is no light without Jesus.

To the extent that we, as believers, are to be salt and light, it is as a light being reflected from us, but originating in Jesus.

If anyone does photography, you might be familiar with reflectors and bounce boards. These are shiny boards that you use to bounce light off one source, usually the sun, and onto your subject. If you use them outside on a sunny day, they can be very bright. They're bright because of the power of the sun. Our light is from Jesus, and it is the glory of the Father that we get the privilege to show to the world.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

This focus on Jesus as the light is used multiple times throughout John's gospel:

John 8:12
12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 9:5
5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

John 12:46
46 I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

This idea of Jesus as the light started back in verse 4 and in verse 5 we read:
5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The word for overcome, can also be translated as understood. So you might have a bible that reads "and the darkness did not understand it". Both of these senses are true. And the default state of the world is indeed darkness.

Satan, to the extent that he has power and sway over the world, does so in darkness and by darkness.

In our sinful state, we walk in darkness. The crazy thing is, we actually liked this. We wanted to stay in the dark and walk without light.

John 3:19

19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

As sinful men and women, we rejected Jesus as the light, and we rejected Jesus as the truth:

Romans 1:

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

25 They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. 32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

And that is the world that Jesus came into as man, 2,000 years ago. It's the world today, sadly. But praise God! How fortunate are we - we have seen the true light that gives light to everyone. Praise God, we get to gather here and worship our Father in heaven, because of people sent of God to preach to us through the bible, and to witness to the light so that we might believe - that we might trust and have faith.

It's alright to say hallelujah and amen to that.

10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

There is some thought that John's gospel was written partly to answer the Greek Gnostic understanding of creation and God. The gnostics, as a serious heresy would not appear until later in the early church, but there was an idea, a concept that Greek philosophers understood that divided the world into spiritual and material. The material was bad and evil, but the spiritual was good. And to this understanding of the world, there was a separation between God and the creation of matter. But that's not the biblical understanding, it's not the truth.

God is the creator of this universe, and His Son is the very person of the Trinity who did this work. And it was good, as we read in Genesis.

So that may be an undercurrent here in some of these verses, especially later in verse 14

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

How many hours could we spend just here - "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" ?

Here is the first offense against God in these verses. He who created the world was rejected by the world. By "the world" we mean the gentile world. All of mankind. The world here doesn't refer to His creation. That is something that does obey Christ. The material world obeys their creator.

We see examples of this in the gospels like in Luke chapter 8 when the seas obey Jesus when they were crossing in the boat:

24 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm.

No, here in these verses in John, the world is mankind. And this is a very offensive thing that we do when we do not recognise God. Not only does the world not recognise Jesus, later we see the

Roman soldiers beating, spitting on Him, mocking Him, whipping Him and crucifying Him. He who made the universe is rejected and beaten by His very created beings.

11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

Now the focus is narrowed to the Jewish people. His very own. Jesus, who is their Messiah, their King, their Lord, the fulfilment of the promises of the Bible - is rejected by them. They who have special understanding of God by the scriptures reject Him.

Was this because Jesus was hidden to His people, and to the world?

No. Jesus was very clear about who He was and why He was here.

John 14:6

6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 10:30

30 I and the Father are one."

Jesus even showed His divinity by the miracles he performed.

Matthew 9:6-8

6 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home." 7 Then the man got up and went home. 8 When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

This is the darkness in its fullest sense - they rejected their very maker and sustainer of life.

12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

The universal invitation of God. The free offer of the gospel. Repent and believe and you'll be saved.

Romans 10

9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

And this invitation has been given to all nations and all people groups.

Revelation 7

9 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice:

*"Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb."*

And the promise was there in the old testament:

Isaiah 55:5

*Surely you will summon nations you know not,
and nations you do not know will come running to you,
because of the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel,*

for he has endowed you with splendor.”

12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

Have you received Him? Truly, have you received Him? Then look at what has been given to you - the right - not the chance, or potential, or opportunity - the right - to become children of God. This gives us the right to cry out Abba, father.

Listen, here in Romans 8

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Listen to that - co-heirs with Christ. Co-heirs with the creator of the world. Co-heirs with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

As Wesley wrote:

Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

This is a gift given to us by God. He and He alone has the authority and ability to give such a gift.

13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

There are 3 “nots” here. Not of natural descent; not of human decision, and not of a husband’s will.

The ESV translation gives perhaps a clearer understanding of the text:

13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Not of blood or natural decent. This right to be called children of God is not due to our ethnic background. It’s not because of what race we are born into that determines this. That is why being born Jewish has no bearing on your salvation.

Not of a human decision - the will of the flesh. It is not your decision that gets you into heaven. Man cannot make up rules or religions and use these to obtain salvation. As much as we ‘receive’ Christ it is only because Christ wills it.

Not of a husband’s will or the will of man. It is not your parents who can grant you salvation. It is not your spouse, no matter how hard they want it. We baptise infants, but we fully recognise that this act does not guarantee any salvation for that child.

No, the giver of the right is God and God alone. This is why it is written “but born of God.”

How privileged we are to receive this gift.

Do you see what the Psalmist saw:

Psalm 8:4-6

4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?

5 You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honor.

Let’s pray.