

John 5:30-6:15
Deuteronomy 4
Psalm 132

“The Fourfold Witness”

May 17, 2020

Moses is preaching his farewell sermons on the plains of Moab
before Israel crosses over into the Promised Land.

Moses sets forth several witnesses:

He points to the Law – the Ten Commandments of the LORD that were given at Sinai.

He reminds them of the story of redemption from Egypt.

He calls heaven and earth as witnesses –

since heaven and earth witnesses the story of redemption –
they will be faithful witnesses against Israel, if Israel rebels.

And in verse 32, he calls “the days that are past” to bear witness –

has any other God done what the LORD our God has done for us?

These are good witnesses –
but they didn’t work.

Israel rebelled.

And Jesus will teach us in John 5 that we need something better.

Psalm 132 points us in the right direction.

The first half of the Psalm refers to the same sorts of witnesses as Moses.

But in the second half, we hear what we need!

We need God himself to act – to speak – and to bring salvation to his people!

Sing Psalm 132
Read John 5:30-6:15

"This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world"

How did they know that this was the Prophet?

How do YOU know that Jesus is the Prophet?

--that he is the One that you should listen to?

Notice what Jesus says in v34:

"I say these things so that you may be saved"

Think about that.

Jesus says that salvation depends on listening to the right people.

Who you listen to--whose testimony and counsel you receive--is very important.

Where do you go for counsel?
Whose voice matters most to you?
 Kids, whose voice do you listen to?
 When your mom calls, do you come running?
 Have you ever been in the store
 and heard someone who sounded like your mom?
 You turn around and look--but it's not her!

We heard last time from the first part of John 5 that Jesus claims to be equal with God.
 He healed the man who had been an invalid for 38 years –
 and in so doing “called God his own Father,
 making himself equal with God.” (v18)

Jesus wants you to understand who he is!
 He is the only-begotten Son of God.
 He is the one who was with the Father in the beginning.
 He is the one who has come down from heaven
 in order that you might be saved!

But he starts off by talking about the importance of testimony:

Introduction: The Importance of Testimony (v30-31)

³⁰ “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³¹ If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true.

Jesus starts by saying that if he alone bore witness, then his own testimony would not be true.

 What does he mean?
 Well, if I came to you and told you that I was the Messiah,
 would you believe me?
 Of course not.
 Simply for Jesus to **say** that he is the Messiah doesn't mean that he is!

 Jesus is referring back to Deuteronomy 17
 which requires at least two or three witnesses.

 If you want to establish a matter clearly at trial,
 then you need more than one witness.

Why do you believe that the world is round?
 Have you personally verified this?
 I have flown all the way around the world.
 But even so, I have to rely on testimony.
 I have to rely on the testimony of the pilot and the airlines that they,

in fact, took me to Paris, and then to Beijing, and then across the Pacific.
I may have a pretty good head for geography –
but then again, all those maps that I studied are not the “real thing” –
they are *maps* which I take on trust that they are relatively accurate.

I rely on *testimony* that the world is round –
on the idea that *someone* would surely cry foul,
if in fact the world is flat!

In the same way, why do you believe that there is a virus causing a pandemic?
Do any of you have personal knowledge of this?
Sure, we all have friends who have gotten sick – some of us have friends who have died.

But how do you *know* that it’s a virus?
Have any of *you* actually gotten out a microscope and watched this virus do its work?

Why do you believe that there is a novel coronavirus out there?
Because of the *testimony* of many witnesses!

All the facts of history are only known to us through testimony.
Why do you believe that George Washington was elected president in 1789?
Because historians have told you so!
None of us were there!

Why should you believe that Jesus is the Prophet – the Messiah – the Son of God?
Why should you believe that salvation depends on faith in him?

Well, Jesus starts by saying, don’t just believe *me* –
there is another who bears witness...

And he starts with John the Baptist.

1. The Testimony of John (v32-35)

The importance of preaching – and the testimony of faithful witnesses

³² *There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true.* ³³ *You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.* ³⁴ *Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.* ³⁵ *He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.*

John has borne witness that Jesus is the Messiah.
John has declared that Jesus is the Son of God.
John had good credentials.

He was the son of a priest – and everyone knew that John was a prophet.

You can trust John, right?

Well, *you can* – but Jesus can't.

Jesus says, "Not that the testimony that I receive is from man."

Remember back in John 2:24-25--Jesus did not entrust himself to the people,
why?

Because he knew what was in man.

Jesus knows that human testimony--even John's testimony--
is not reliable enough.

You see,

Jesus is talking about salvation.

Are you going to entrust your life--and not just THIS life--but your eternity!--
to mere human testimony?

John's testimony is true.

And it is valid--it comes from an independent witness.

But Jesus says, "I do not receive testimony from man."

It's good; but it's not good enough.

There are better witnesses to Jesus than John.

John "was a burning and shining lamp,
and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light."

John 1 says that Jesus is the Light of the World.

John 1 says that John was NOT that light.

Here Jesus says,

John was a light--but his light only lasted for a time.

John's light will be snuffed out.

If your hope and your trust is in John's light--then you will live in darkness.

(Incidentally, there is still a group of John's disciples who never accepted Jesus!

The Mandeans of Iraq and Iran revere John the Baptist – but they reject Jesus.
Refusing the Light of the world, they now walk in darkness)

Jesus is the Light of the World.

The lesser light is good--but it is only good because it points you to the True Light.

If you become preoccupied with John,

then you have missed the John's message.

John was a pointer to Christ.

This is what preaching is *supposed to do* – point you to Jesus!

God has given us many good gifts to remind us of who He is and what He has done.

But if you become preoccupied with the gift, rather than the giver,
then you have missed the point of the gift.

You've seen your children do that, haven't you?

You give them something they've been wanting,
and what happens?
Do they throw themselves into your arms and say,
"Thank you so much!!"
Or do they immediately start playing with the new toy?
What matters more?
The gift or the giver?
And yet this is what we often do to our Heavenly Father:
He gives us good gifts--and we neglect to be grateful.

That's why Jesus says--look I have a greater witness than John's!
John's witness is not enough.
It is not enough to have this little shining lamp--John will burn out!

So Jesus points to the *greater* testimony:

2. The Testimony of the Works (v36)

The importance of the miracles of Jesus – culminating in his resurrection from the dead

³⁶ *But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.*

The works that Jesus does, bear witness to who He is.

What are the works that Jesus does?

Well, what have we seen so far in John's gospel?

First, He turned water into wine:

He took the water of purification and transformed it into the wine of rejoicing.

The old has become new.

Jesus is saying that HE is the bridegroom

who will provide the wine of rejoicing for HIS wedding-feast.

Second, He cleansed the temple--and declared that HE is the new temple.

Again, the old has become new;

the wood and stone of the old temple has given way
to the true temple of Jesus' own body.

Third, Jesus healed the nobleman's son and the man at Bethesda,
claiming the right to give life to the dead.

How do these things tell us that Jesus is sent by the Father?

Well, Nicodemus understood the answer to this.

He said back in chapter 3--"Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God;
for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."

The signs that Jesus did were demonstrations of who he is.

This is how God had always operated.

Miracles always accompanied revelation.

The miraculous deed always goes with the revealed Word.

There are actually very few times that you see clusters of miracles in the Bible.

There are three main times (with a few others scattered here and there):

1) Moses was the first prophet.

How were the people of Israel to know that God had sent him?

Because he performed miracles and proclaimed the Word of God.

The two went together.

But then from Joshua to Elijah,

there are very few miracles in Israel.

There are a few signs here and there

(like Gideon's fleece),

but even these are connected with the great events of God's redemption

--the deliverance that God gives from their enemies.

2) Then in the days of Elijah and Elisha comes the second wave of miracles.

This is also the time that God sends a new wave of prophets:

God is sending forth his word in a new way,

therefore God does miracles through these men.

But then from Elisha to Jesus, miracles become much more sporadic.

3) This is why Jesus performs miracles:

that they might bear witness that the Father has sent Him.

Jesus is the Final Word.

He brings God's revelation in full measure.

And the works that he does--the miracles and signs that he performs--

are the greatest and most powerful works of all.

Incidentally, this is why we should not expect people to go around performing miracles!

Sure, God can still heal people—that is true.

But God will not go back to the old ways.

Remember the parable of the vineyard?

The master sends his servants to see how the vineyard is doing.

But the workers beat them up and mistreat them.

Then, finally, he sends his Son--and the workers kill him!

God sent the prophets in the OT,

and now he has sent Jesus.

Once he has sent his Son, he has no one left to send.

If they won't listen to Jesus,

then they certainly won't listen to a prophet!

Word and Deed go together.

Jesus IS the Word of God; he both *speaks* the Word, and he *does* the Word.

And both his words and his deeds testify that the Father has sent him.

You know the saying, "actions speak louder than words"?

That's what Jesus is saying.

You are now in Christ.

He has raised you from the dead, and has given you new life.

Indeed, it is now HIS life that is at work in you.

Your actions; your words; now reveal Christ to others.

Do you know why God doesn't send any more prophets?

It is because Christ--the great prophet--
is in YOU!

As Jesus will say in John 6:53-58...

⁵³ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread^[c] the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."

If you partake of Christ,

then Christ abides in you--and you will live forever!

Thus *you* become witnesses to Christ!

The Father sent Jesus –
and Jesus sends us!

The testimony of the works of Christ now comes through the preaching of the Word!

But it is not merely his works that testify to who Jesus is--there is another... (v37)

3. The Testimony of the Father (v37-38)

*The importance of the internal witness of the Spirit – connected to the **word***

³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, ³⁸ and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.

The Father testifies to who Jesus is.

Jesus says that the Jews (and here he is referring to the Pharisees in particular),
have neither heard the Father's voice, nor seen his form.

How then can anyone know what the Father says about Jesus?

Where has the Father testified to Jesus?

(v38)

The Father has testified to Jesus in the Word--in the Scriptures.

What does it mean to have the "word abiding in you"?

Obviously it's not simply studying the Bible.

Look at v39.

The Jews are already searching the Scriptures.

They are studying zealously,

because they think that eternal life can be found in its pages.

You see,

it's not enough to simply study the Scriptures.

Oh, you MUST study the Scriptures--Jesus agrees with them there!

But it is not simply in the act of studying Scripture that you find eternal life.

You must understand what the Father is saying about Jesus IN Scripture.

The Bible is NOT our highest authority.

God is.

Jesus is saying that it's not enough to know the Bible.

You must know God himself!

It's not enough to simply quote Scripture.

You must have the Word abiding in you.

You must accept what the Father is saying about Jesus.

Later Jesus will explain that this is the work of the Holy Spirit.

But for now, Jesus is focused on the relationship between himself and the Father.

There is an internal witness in our hearts that comes from God himself.

And this comes only by faith!

Why is this important?

If your knowledge of God is entirely dependent on something other than God,
then it's not going to be reliable.

Many atheists will focus on this point of testimony.

They want God to *prove himself* to them.

I'm sympathetic to that.

I understand the desire –

but I've also experienced the flip side of that.

I once asked for signs – and God gave me the signs.

But how long did that last?

It didn't take long at all for me to start questioning – was that really God?
And besides, what did it really mean?

My knowledge of God was in danger of becoming dependent
on *my interpretation of what had happened.*

Not on *God himself.*

When the atheist says, “if there was a God then he would reveal himself more often” –
that is absurd.

If our God was the sort of God that felt the need to prove himself to us –
he would be doing nothing else but sign after sign after sign –
miracles would be ordinary – but we would not be depending on *God.*

The final witness that Jesus calls is Moses – and the scriptures.

4. The Testimony of the Scriptures (v39-47)

The importance of Moses and the prophets – and of all the scriptures

³⁹ *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they
that bear witness about me,* ⁴⁰ *yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.*

Do you think that Scripture is our highest authority?

You can see here clearly that scripture is *not* the highest authority for Jesus!
I'm happy to say that the Westminster Confession agrees with Jesus!

In chapter 1, the Confession says that the authority of the Holy Scripture
“depends not upon the testimony of any man, or church;
but wholly upon God (who is truth itself):
and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.” (1:4)

What is our highest authority?
God.

We search the Scriptures because we have come to Jesus that we may have life!

Don't get that backwards!

Think about the apostolic preaching in the book of Acts.
Did they *start* by trying to get people to believe the Scriptures?
No!

Sure, they use the scriptures to tell the story of redemption –
from Abraham, Moses, or David all the way to Christ –
but they are calling people to believe in Christ.

They do not start by trying to persuade people to believe the Bible,

so *that* they will believe in Jesus.

Jesus makes it clear that we have to *start* by coming to *him*.

If you are struggling with doubt and unbelief –
you need to come to Jesus!
You need to hear *him*.

Jesus goes on in verse 41 to say:

⁴¹ I do not receive glory from people. ⁴² But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

What does it mean that “you receive glory from one another?”
What does it mean that you “do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?”

When people are big – and God is small –
then you are more concerned with what people say about you –
and less concerned with what God says about you.
Why are you so concerned with what people think about you?

Jesus says that those who seek glory from one another
“do not have the love of God” within them.

Jesus is zeroing in on our biggest problem:
namely, that we do not love God –
and particularly that we do not have the love of God within us.
This is one of those phrases that goes both ways!
Does Jesus mean that we don't have God's love for us?
Or our love for God?

Both in Greek and in English, the phrase could go either way.
I suspect John would tell you – I knew that!
That's why I used that phrase!

(Certainly in 1 John he will make very explicit how all this works out –
God's love is shed abroad in our hearts – therefore we love him
because he first loved us...)

But Jesus is not here to accuse and condemn:

⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote

of me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

The Scriptures themselves testify to Jesus.

And in Jesus' day, the "scriptures" consist of the OT.
And yet Jesus says that the OT is written about Him!
So if you read the OT and don't learn about Christ,
then you aren't reading the OT correctly!

Jesus says that if you really believe Moses,
then you will understand who Jesus is!
If you do not believe Moses words,
then you will not believe Jesus' words!

Let me ask you something:

How well do you know your Old Testament?
How well do you understand and believe Moses and the prophets?
Do you believe that they testify to Christ?
Do you understand what they are saying about Christ?

Jesus says "Moses wrote about me!"
All of the OT points to Christ.

If you would be interested in a reading group that would go through the OT like this,
let me know.

I think we're due for something like this!

(Maybe we could do that as our Pastor in the Pub discussion for the summer?)

Conclusion: Prophet and King (6:1-15)

*6 After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.
² And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.
³ Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover,
the feast of the Jews, was at hand. ⁵ Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was
coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may
eat?" ⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. ⁷ Philip answered him,
"Two hundred denarii^[a] worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little."
⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹ "There is a boy here who
has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" ¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the
people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five
thousand in number. ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed
them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹² And when they had
eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be
lost." ¹³ So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley
loaves left by those who had eaten. ¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said,
"This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"
¹⁵ Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus*

withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

We read the first part of chapter 6 because Jesus is now demonstrating what he means by saying that Moses spoke of him.

After all, word and deed go together, right?!!
In chapter 6, Jesus starts by healing the sick,
and then he takes his disciples up to a mountain to teach them
Well, it says that the Passover was near (v4)--and we keep seeing
the importance of the feasts in the Gospel of John
The crowds are following Jesus again.

And so Jesus asks, "where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"
Philip says that it would take 8-9 months wages to feed them!
Andrew mentions that a boy has five loaves and two fish--but that's not enough
So Jesus has the 5,000 sit down,
and then he gave thanks and gave it to his disciples,
and they gave it to those who were seated.
The disciples then gathered 12 baskets of leftovers!

What does this remind you of?

The people are gathered in the wilderness--and they have no food.
They have gathered because they have seen the signs that Jesus has performed.
They are gathered around the time of the Passover!

This is the exact same situation that the Israelites were in when they came out of Egypt!
They were gathered in the wilderness--and they had no food.
They had come because they had seen the signs that Moses had performed.
They were gathered around the time of the Passover.

And what did God do in Exodus?

He gave them bread from heaven.

And what does Jesus do in John?

He gave them bread from heaven.

And 12 baskets were left over--enough to feed the 12 tribes of Israel.

The bread from heaven that Jesus gives is enough to feed ALL of his people.

Well, the crowd understands this!

They see the sign that Jesus did, and what do they say?

"This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world" (v14)

If you believed Moses you would believe me.

Jesus is demonstrating that he is indeed the one of whom Moses had written.

God has given abundant testimony that Jesus is indeed the Son of God.

Do you believe it?