

Jesus Recommissions His Disciples Part 6: Be Faithful to the End cont.

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Gospel of John
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As the children make their way to children's church, I do want to mention something that I want you to be aware of. Many of you are aware of this but may need reminders but we certainly need more volunteers. We have a wonderful ministry that we've been doing now for two years, it's called "The Good News Club," and it's a ministry of Child Evangelism Fellowship which is a good ministry and does a lot of good work, though some of their materials have been a little weak and some of their methods in the past, but we've gotten involved in one aspect of their ministry we just feel really great about and so thankful that the Lord raised them up to do this work. Basically, what's happened is since the Supreme Court ruled some years back that you couldn't disallow Christian clubs to meet on public school grounds like they had been for so long, you could now go into public schools and take the Gospel after school hours with clubs that are freely offered and folks can sign up for them and come. So anyway, the long story short, we started two years ago and have for the last two school years working at a school in Duluth called Chesney Elementary School and it's near the Gwinnett Mall and we have ministered to between 30 and 40 kids, maybe average is 30, I don't know, something like that, on a weekly basis. On Wednesday afternoons, we have a team of folks that go over and have an hour and a half program and the material we check out, it's been really good; the material has been exceptionally good and clear on the Gospel and we're able to minister in a wonderful way to these young people and have seen folks grow in grace and others come to Christ.

Anyway, we need more volunteers and it's time, the ministry starts in October though the training starts in September. There is a training coming up in about a month and so if you're interested in being a part of that, if you can give an hour and a half, well actually, I guess, a couple of hours with the drive over and back on a Wednesday afternoon from like 3:30 to 5, 3:20 to 4:50, something like that, it's a great way to make a difference. So we encourage you to think about that. If you're interested, please let Cathy iele know. She's done a wonderful job of coordinating and managing that ministry so let her know, or you can contact the church office.

Now, I invite you to turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of John. We said last time that was probably the last time I would say it but never say never, right? As Yogi Berra said, "It ain't over til it's over," and so I think this is going to be the last time. I'm not sure. We've

been in this Gospel for almost six years. I looked it up, it was September 26, 2010 was my first message there. This is the 193rd message in the Gospel of John so really, in fairness, that's really only four years in the Gospel because four years with just normal weeks off and stuff, that would be four years. So we did some other series along the way, but still that is a lot of time and I feel like I'm losing a dear friend knowing that I won't be preaching on this probably again the rest of my life, there will be other books that we need to go to. But it's been a joy to me to work in this Gospel and today we come to the last message, verses 20 and 25 again, and so the title of the message is still what it has been throughout the 21st chapter which is the main heading over the chapter I think is "Jesus Recommissions His Disciples." He's, in a sense, giving a kind of Great Commission to them. It's a parallel of the Great Commission. I'm not saying this is the Great Commission. Over the weeks that he spent with them, he was giving them this message, not just once but repeatedly. It's showing them what you are to be about because when he ascended, he would not be with them again personally anymore, the Holy Spirit would come down and minister to them, and so he's giving them something very much like what we see in Matthew 28:18-20 in the Great Commission as Matthew ends his Gospel. So John recounts this particular appearance of Jesus in which he gave in a very unique way the same basic commission.

"You're to be about making disciples." And we've said that, we've looked at that Jesus recommissions his disciples and we've said there are four headings that he basically calls them to, "Fish for men," we spent one week on that; "Feed My sheep," we looked at that for a couple of weeks; and then, "Follow Me," also a couple of weeks; and now, "Be faithful to the end." And we've seen that this "Be faithful to the end" commission comes as he focuses the spotlight on John himself, the author of the Gospel. Peter had been front and center for some time as we go through the Gospel, the 21st chapter, but now in verses 20 to 25, the spotlight shifts from Peter to the disciple whom Jesus loved, that is to John himself, the author of this Gospel, and the fellow disciple of Jesus, and we've seen that John's path is a very different path than Peter's. John, as I mentioned earlier when I read the Scripture, he would live a long and full life. Just as Peter's path was exemplary of how we should live, "Follow Me even if it means dying," so also John's life is exemplary. He lives a long and full life; a life of continued faithfulness, of being faithful to the end.

So that's the theme of the message that we started looking at last week: be faithful to the end. And we subdivided that theme, be faithful to the end, how do you become faithful to the end, how do you hold on to the end, under two subheadings. Last week we saw that what John did to be faithful to the end was he continued to abide in the love of Christ and that was our focus last week; that if we want to be faithful to the end, we need to abide in the love of Christ. Know how much he loves us and respond to his love. Today we're going to continue to answer that question how to be faithful to the end with a second aspect that I think we see in these verses. To be faithful to the end, we need to abide in the words of Christ. To abide in the word. I say the words of Christ, I mean the words about Jesus; the words of Jesus that he spoke but also the words about Jesus which means the whole Bible. Let's be clear on that, not the red letter version, not that I have anything against the red letter version but just like treating those verses as more the word of God than others is completely in error. All Scripture is God-breathed. Every word of it and so

when I say the words of Christ, I mean everything in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. So what John demonstrates I think in this passage and as we think about the whole of the Gospel, this kind of sums up the whole of the Gospel as well, that what his life exemplifies is a faithfulness to the end that came from abiding in the love of Christ but today looking at he continued to abide in the word of Christ and so if we're going to be faithful to the end, we need to do the same, to abide in the word of Christ.

Let's read verses 20 to 25 and we'll begin to try to unpack this aspect of discipleship. Actually, let's read at verse 18. This is Jesus talking to Peter and he says in verse 18,

18 "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." 19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

John, as we looked at a few weeks ago, is telling us that when Jesus said this to Peter, Peter understood that he meant he would be crucified. Stretch out your hands and to be led, girded and led by someone was a way of saying, a form and figure of speech of saying to be crucified so John makes that clear in verse 19. And after he says, "Follow Me!" in verse 19, then we come in verse 20,

20 Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" 21 So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" 23 Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" 24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true. 25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.

Let's pray together.

Father, we come this morning as always mindful of our inadequacy, our inability, our dependence. We ask that because of Jesus' blood and his gift of righteousness and his gift of the Spirit, that you would minister to us from your word. Help us truly to see what you would have us see and to be what you would have us be. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

"Be faithful to the end." To be faithful to the end means that we must abide in the words of Christ. Abide in the words of Christ. We come to this conclusion of John's Gospel and

when we look at it in light of all that we've read earlier in the Gospel, it becomes clear that this is one of the things that marked and shaped his ministry; he was one who abode or who remained and continued in the word. I mean, there are some things about his Gospel that the content and the character of his Gospel, that distinguished him from the others. It's really something that's astonishing the more that you think about it. I mentioned earlier, I believe every word of God is inspired. Every single word of every book, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, all the Old Testament, it's all inspired. It's all perfect and yet that said, it's inspired means every word is the word of God but every word, and this is the most amazing aspect of it, every word is also the word of man. The Bible is a fully divine book at the same time it's a fully human book so that when you read the Bible, every word is there by the superintending purpose of God. It's there by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It's there for a divine purpose and yet at the same time, it is written by a person with a personality and a set of life experiences that shape what they wrote and God is so much bigger than we think, when he wanted to have Isaiah write his prophesy, he prepared Isaiah all the way from birth to be the man who would then think the way he thought when he wrote the prophesy of Isaiah. This is why Amos writes like a fisherman, and this is how Peter differs from John.

One of the things that makes John's Gospel unique is the fact that he lived so long in the word of God. Every Gospel is perfect but they're unique. They each have different insights. I love Ken Temple, our own Ken Temple, the missionary brother that's been a part of our church for about ten years now, a mission to Iranians and to Muslims, and he tells about when he was explaining to a Muslim inquirer on the streets of Istanbul, he was talking to this young Turk about the Gospels and this guy asked him, "Why are there four Gospels? Why Matthew, Mark, Luke and John?" And Ken, the Lord gave him this insight, he said, "Imagine there was a traffic accident right here at this corner and the police come out and it's a little bit of a complicated thing, you know, who was at fault. Would it be better to have one witness or to have four coming at different vantage points that saw what happened?" "It would be much better to have four," he said. "Well, that's something of why God gave us the Gospels. It's four views at the perfect splendor of the eternal Son of God."

So there's a sense in which Matthew, he offers us something that John doesn't, or Mark doesn't, or Luke doesn't. And the same for Mark, and the same for Luke, and the same for John. And the thing that John offers us is the fruit I would submit to you is the fruit of years and years of careful study and faithful meditation, and that the Spirit of God superintending that gives us in the Gospel of John something extraordinary and distinct. He gives us a penetrating depth of insight into certain areas that...and one of the things that he also does, I just thought about this again, when we've read through the Gospel, there will be times where, say for instance, you know, he tells us about Jesus telling the people at the temple that, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it," and they didn't understand it. And John says, he's unique in this, he's the only one who adds the clarifying comment, "He was speaking about the temple of His body." Well, I think Matthew and Mark understood that, Mark, of course, would be writing really Peter's Gospel, we believe, working with Peter to write that Gospel, they both understood that

but John is the one who sees something; he's thought more about it and he's thinking more about how Jesus is the replacement of the temple. He's had more time to ponder it.

This is why in John 1:14 he says, "And the Word," the eternal Word that created the whole world, "became flesh, and tabernacled among us." The word "dwelt" really means "pitched his tent," so that the word in Hebrew, the tabernacle was the meeting place and as that Hebrew word was translated into Greek, it was into a word that spoke of the tent itself and the pitching of the tent and so the Greek speakers who read their Bibles saw that "pitched a tent" and they immediately thought of the tabernacle. So when he says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," tabernacled among us. He's saying that the tabernacle and the temple were replaced by Jesus. He tells you that in John 1:14, then when he comes to John 2 and he tells you about when Jesus said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it," he reminds you he's talking about the temple of his body.

So there's this penetrating depth of insight. There is this elegance and style, rich irony, that characterizes this book that came from years of long reflection and meditation upon the word and we're going to see in the passage that we have before us, I think allusions to that that will help us. So we are to continue in the word. This continues a theme that he has talked about other places in his Gospel. In John 8:31 he says, "If you continue in My word," Jesus said this, "If you continue in My word, then truly are you My disciples and you'll know the truth and the truth will make you free," so that what characterizes the true disciple is continuance in the words of Christ. That word "continue" is the same word as "abide." It's the same exact verb, so when he says, "abide in My love, abide in My word, continue in My word," it's the same word.

So the characteristic of a true disciple is they continue; they abide. John 15:7 when he's talking about abiding in the vine, he also says this in verse 7, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." If you abide in Me and My words abide in you. In 2 John 9 that we read earlier today he says, "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son." So it's remaining and abiding in the teaching. In fact, abide, continue, remain, three ways of translating that same word, it basically means to abide somewhere, to continue somewhere, to remain somewhere, means you don't leave. You stay in the word of God. You just don't leave. Your whole life is not leaving the word of God. Continuing to not leave. It's present tense verbs he uses in those places: continuing to continue; continuously continuing; abidingly abiding in the word. That's what was his secret and that's what all Christians are called to, to abide in the love of Christ and to abide in the word of Christ is to become faithful to the end.

Now, the question is how to abide in the words of Christ and I think this passage, verses 20 to 25, give us some real help here. How do you abide in the words of Christ? There are three things, I think, we see in the passage that I want to point out to you. To abide in the words of Christ, there are three verbs basically that we're going to look at and the first is: listen. Listen. Listen carefully to the words of Christ. That's the whole point, the first point. Listen carefully to the words of Christ. If you want to abide in the words of Christ,

first of all, listen carefully to the words of Christ. Be attentive. Be precise. This passage, John deals with a problem of misinterpretation of Jesus' words.

There was a common misinterpretation of the question that Jesus asked Peter in verse 22. John records that question when Jesus says to him, remember Peter said, "Lord, what about this man?" and Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" John says, verse 23, "Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die." What happened? There was a widespread misinterpretation of Jesus' words. People thought it's guaranteed John will not die. Jesus will return before John dies. What this illustrates for us is the ease with which the people of God misinterpret the word of God.

He says, "this went out among the brethren," verse 23. It wasn't the unbelievers that were believing this, it was the brethren. "This saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die." They misunderstood and John knows that this misunderstanding which is so easy to happen in the body of Christ, in the people of God, is potentially deadly and one from which he must protect them from harm. I mean, think about this: if he doesn't correct this, when John dies and Jesus hasn't returned, what then? People would be wondering, "Jesus said something that wasn't true. He said John would not die until he came back. John died. He hasn't come back. Jesus was wrong." Or what we've heard from the word, the Bible is wrong. Or, worse, the error that was already commonly being taught in the first century even in Paul's ministry, there were false teachers teaching that Jesus had already returned or that the resurrection had already taken place.

In fact, turn over to 2 Timothy for a minute. The book of 2 Thessalonians is all about this as well, but 2 Timothy is a good place to look. 2 Timothy 2, it's verse 18 but we'll start at verse 16. Paul is here speaking to the young pastor, Timothy, his own disciple and saying, "Listen, you've got to deal with the false teaching out there." So he says, verse 16, 2 Timothy 2:16, "But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk," the false teaching, the empty chatter, "will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus," he names two false teachers by name. "Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some." They were teaching some kind of spiritualized resurrection, some kind of spiritualized second coming, not the visible bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the physical resurrection of the dead and so people might have been subject to this kind of false teaching when John died and Jesus hadn't returned and so John in his Gospel urges them to understand and pay careful attention. In verse 23 he says, "yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, 'If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?'"

You know, this idea of how easy it is for us to misinterpret the word of God, and I would add how easy it is for us to misinterpret especially as it relates to eschatology, you realize this is what's happening here. They have gotten off, departed from the truth because they were so excited about knowing when the second coming is going to happen, what are the particulars of how it's going to happen, and so they missed the import of what Jesus

actually said. They don't interpret correctly. We see that happening so much today. When people spend too much time talking about eschatology, beware. You shouldn't talk more about anything in the Bible than God does. You should major on the things he majors on and minor on the things he minors on, and he minors on the doctrine of last things. In fact, when you think he's majoring on it, he's even minoring on it then.

Let me explain. The book of Revelation, what is the point of the book of Revelation? Well, it does tell us about the second coming of Christ, yes, and it does tell us some wonderful, gives us wonderful pictures and glorious depictions of what it's going to be like when Jesus returns and he judges the world in righteousness, but in reality when you think about it correctly and you cut it straight and you understand correctly what's being said, the point of the book of...you know, sometimes people say the Revelations or the book of Revelations which kind of shows a little bit of the misunderstanding and missing the main point. The title is the Revelation, singular, of Jesus Christ. So what is the point? It is the fact that Jesus Christ is revealed in his glory. It's not revelations about the future that are the main point to God, no, it is the glory of his Son is revealed and when you see that, that helps to put it in context properly. Then you put together the fact that John wrote that to encourage, the Apostle John given that by the Lord Jesus, commissioned to write that last book of the Bible to finish the Canon, he wrote it to people who were in tribulation, in persecution or who were about to face fierce persecution and so what was the point of it to them? It wasn't so that they could tell exactly what was going to happen more than 2,000 years in the future. What good would that have been to them? The point was, "Listen, no matter what happens to you, Jesus Christ is Lord. He reigns. He's going to return. Be faithful to the end." That's the point, and when you put the main point, it helps you look at the secondary points.

Now back to our text. Let me show you how this works. In John 21, people are misinterpreting thinking, "Hey, this means John's going to be alive when Jesus returns." John says, "Wait a minute, guys, you didn't listen carefully." Look what he said, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" Put it in context. What's his main point at that point as he says that to Peter? Is his main point to give Peter and John listening to him the exact timing of the second coming? No, and in fact Scripture interprets Scripture, you also, you're thinking carefully about the less clear passage you interpret in light of more clear passages and other Scripture helps us interpret it. Jesus has already told us that no one knows the day or the hour of his second coming except the Father so he's not going to be giving the day or the hour or some kind of precise time it's going to happen within 60 years.

But more than that, look at what his point is. It's not to give them that, it's to really pop Peter upside the head and he means it to be painful in the same way that a parent lovingly disciplines their child and administers pain. I mean, it can be done in an ungodly way, of course, but spare the rod, spoil the child, the Bible says. So when a loving father or mother disciplines their child for their good, they have to inflict pain in order to bless their child. This is why Hebrews 12, we're told that God teaches us that way. When you're going through troubles and turmoils, he says, "Hey, remember, if God loves you,

he disciplines the son he loves." So if you're going through pain, that's an evidence that God loves you.

So he's basically doing that to Peter. It's kind of an over-the-top, emphatic reproof meant to sting, to be painful. It's to mean, "Peter, it's none of your business. If I even wanted him to live until I come back, what would that matter to you? What business is it of yours?" So then you understand that, well, it makes sense that, "Hey, that's probably a figurative...he's making that statement really just to hammer home, to drive home that point."

So John makes that clear and I think it's actually amazing too, though, I thought about this, John is telling us, "Hey, I'm going to die before Jesus comes back because he didn't say I was going to stay alive until he came back." But it's also amazing about how perfect the word of God is because if you think about it, John lived a very long lifeline, God wanted him to, and then he wanted to work through him in all kinds of ways. Yes. Yes. Yes. He also wanted him to be exiled to a place called Patmos in his later years of life and to be given a vision of the second coming of Christ so that he lived a physical life until he actually saw the coming, even though it wasn't yet that time. So the word is perfect on every level and we just need to cut it straight.

I mentioned that passage to you earlier, 2 Timothy 2:16-18 when he says that Hymenaeus and Philetus are teaching that the resurrection has happened and they are upsetting the faith of some. It's interesting, verse 16 we started reading at, the verse right before that says, Paul says to Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved unto God, a workman who need not be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." You've got to be a strong workman, Timothy, so you can protect the people and you have to cut it straight. And so we have to cut it straight because of the potential harm. One of the most dangerous things is half-truths. Every heresy is a half-truth. So many people that are in hell are there because of half-truths, heretical misunderstandings. This is why the Scripture warns us about false teachers. We read from 2 John, "Don't even let them, don't even greet them. Don't let them in your house and don't greet them, these guys that are coming around claiming to teach the Gospel but who are not teaching the Gospel. You need to reprove them, rebuke them. Don't welcome them. Don't act like everything's okay." Truth is a matter of life and death; error is deadly.

So be careful with it. He's basically saying, "Be a Berean," Acts 17:11, "search the Scriptures daily to see if the things you are being taught are true, but then also be involved in a community of faith where other believers are committed to the truth and where there are leaders that are committed to the truth." So listen carefully to the words of Christ. Make sure you're hearing it accurately, the balance of God's word. That's how you abide in the word. That's the first point: listen. That was the first imperative. The second imperative is: meditate. Meditate deeply on the words of Christ.

Now, you have this, I think, in verse 25, at least alluded to and, I think, as it ties together with the whole Gospel as I've been talking about. It's really an interesting statement he makes here, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were

written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written." That's an amazing statement. It recalls verse 30 of chapter 20, "many other things that Jesus did," chapter 20, verse 30, "There are many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book, but these have been written so that you may believe." So he's again coming to the fact that, "I've been very selective," he's saying, "in what I put down here and if everything Jesus did was written down, I don't think books would hold it, the world would hold the books that would be written."

I'm going to read to you from D. A. Carson's commentary. What does he mean? Is this a case of hyperbole? I mean, certainly Scripture does use hyperbole from time to time, it says all of Jerusalem went out to him, something like that, that's hyperbole, hyperbolic. It doesn't mean every single person. It's like the way we use English, use language, we speak that way. But is this pure hyperbole? Carson has an interesting take on this and I agree. He says, "Doubtless this statement that the world could not contain the books written, doubtless this may be taken as a pardonable exaggeration," Carson says. "It may be but the stylistic and theological care of the evangelists throughout the work argue decisively against that suggestion. If in verse 24 the evangelist has already alluded to the prologue, it is best to think he is doing so again." In verse 24 when he said, "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things," he's alluding back to the beginning. And he goes on to write, "The Jesus to whom he bears witness is not only the obedient Son and the risen Lord, but he's also the Incarnate Word, the one through whom the universe was created. If all his deeds were described, the world would be a very small and inadequate library indeed." The planet couldn't hold it, and you think about that, I mean, certainly it's amazing the depth of knowledge and the glory of the work of the Word who has created everything, through whom all things exist.

I was reading an article the other day, I think it was in Answers Magazine, where they were talking about anemometrics, have you heard of that? It's basically where the engineering world like say, for instance, airplanes, they study the flight of birds and the way that different birds fly and they try to then do engineering to take advantage of some of the technology that's there in the bird, you know, the feather design and things like that. They're trying to study that to mimic the animal. This happens all over the place and you can spend so much time just studying the flight of one bird; somebody could spend their life studying that, really getting down to exactly how the feathers work and the muscles, how they work together. The world of engineering is finally coming along with that and they're talking about how you think about it, you watch an airplane take off, you know, what does an airplane look like compared to a hawk? Or, you know, a robin flitting through the trees in the woods. Or a hummingbird. I mean, an airplane is just this big old metal thing with just enough power shooting out the back of it that somehow it gets airborne and you're like looking at the thing and that thing could fall at any moment, and sure enough, if the jet engine stops, it doesn't go like this, it goes like that.

Well, the point is, Carson is saying you can take any area of creation and study it to the nth degree and keep on studying it and the level of knowledge there is infinite. You can study the solar system, you can study the galaxies that go beyond our galaxy, you can

study the smallest little animal, the smallest single cell entity, and you can study it and spend a lifetime studying it and when you're done, you won't have exhausted it. You will have just begun to do the work. Now, beyond that I would add this, I would go one step farther than Carson: I think John is actually saying that the works that Jesus himself did in his earthly ministry are that way. I think he's saying that if we had written down every moment of every day that Jesus lived, that we could spend so much time studying that that the books would start stacking up and stacking up until the world was full. There would be no place to walk. I mean, think about it: imagine if, we could talk about, if you had been there and watched the way Jesus cried as a baby and the difference between how every other sinner has cried as a baby, you could talk about that and you could describe that. The nature of his crying. There was no demandingness in it. Or the way he answered his mother when she told him to take out the garbage. You talk about it all the different times, the times when she did it the right way when she was walking in obedience, the times when she was sinfully angry and she mistreated him, and you could talk about every single one of them and you can describe, "This is how the perfect way to respond in that situation is." You could talk about the way he touched the leper, the lepers that we don't even know about, the thousands of miracles that we don't even have recorded for us; the thousands of words that he spoke to people, the millions of words that he spoke to people that we don't have recorded during his ministry, during his life. And you could take any one of those and spend your life working on that and it would be a treasure. I say this on the 193rd message on the Gospel of John.

I was talking to a friend the other day, a young pastor in his first pastorate; he's just been there two years. He just finished the book of Ephesians. A wonderful brother, actually mention his church, Treasuring Christ Church in Athens. Boyd Johnson is his name and a really wonderful brother. He graduated from the Master's Seminary. Anyway, we were talking over lunch and he said he just finished Ephesians and he had the thought that, "I'm never going to preach through the book of Ephesians again," and I thought, "You're a lot younger than me. Hearing you say that really made me feel old because that certainly means I'm not going to be preaching through the Gospel of John again." But he said this, he said, "I feel like now I'm finally almost ready to preach through Ephesians," and I feel the same way about the Gospel of John. I think maybe now I almost can get a little bit of an angle at it. I can get this thing done right. Of course we wouldn't, we'd get through the second time and say, "Now I'm ready. Let me have another shot at it."

And the reality is, you know, isn't it amazing someone will share...you'll hear a message from somebody on a passage that you've looked at a number of times and there's a freshness and an aliveness and a power to it that is just transforming. It's like you've never heard it before but you have. What is it? It's the living and active word of God and so the depths are so great. That's what he's saying. He's saying, "Listen, if you look at anything God has said and you just kept delving into it, you would keep finding nourishment and keep finding nourishment." There is infinite potential to every word that he's written. I love what Stephen Lawson said, I heard him say this in a meeting one day. He said, "I've never finished preparing a sermon in my life. I only had to stop preparing because it was time to preach." I feel the same way. It's now time to give you what I've got so far. The sad thing about expositing is after you get done you think, "Man, I think I

could have done that a lot better if I just..." You've got to move on. Next passage. It would be kind of boring if we were always preaching on that same passage every week, wouldn't it? I don't think it would, really, but it wouldn't look good on the sign anyway outside.

The content and character of John's Gospel. Let me just talk a little bit about the uniqueness of his insight. He carefully selects the signs and the miracles that he puts on display in his Gospel. He gives you much less in quantity than the other Gospel writers. He gives us seven or eight, depending on how you actually count them, but we'll go with the seven number and that's most common. The water to wine, he tells us about that. He tells us about the healing of the nobleman's son. He tells us about the healing of Jesus of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, that's number 3. He tells us about the feeding of the 5,000, that's number 4. He tells us about Jesus walking on water, that's number 5. He tells us about the healing of the man born blind in John 9, that's number 6. And he tells us about the raising from the dead of his dear friend Lazarus, that's number 7.

What's interesting, though, is that John, through the years of walking with God, the ministry of the Holy Spirit continuing to teach things, as he continues to meditate and reflect, that he connects his signs with discourses which is completely unique. I mean, they all talk about, all four Gospels record the feeding of the 5,000 because that was an extraordinary miracle. Remember, five loaves, two fish feed 5,000 men plus women and children, and they took up 12 baskets full of leftovers. But John is the only one who remembered. Now, again, how did this happen? I mean, the Spirit could have done it for all of them. He doesn't need that extra time but God works through means. You know, as you cooperate with him and seek him, you will find. You have to knock for him to open. So John had more time to knock, more time to seek, and so when he recounts the feeding of the 5,000, he remembers that right after it Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. The one who comes to Me will not hunger. The one who believes in Me will never thirst." That beautiful discourse in John 6 flows right out of that ministry and obviously it happened that way but the other apostles are just running on past it, and it's okay. God inspired them to write what they had but aren't we thankful that God gave us John?

The healing of the man born blind in John 9. He connects it with a discourse he gave previous to that in John 8 when Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world and the one who believes in Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the Light of life." Now, the way you see it's even connected is, Jesus the next day as he's walking about to encounter the man born blind, he says, "I am the Light of the world," again, and then he encounters the man born blind, heals him. And so John is saying, what he's doing is, he said, "This are enacted parables. I see it now. The feeding of the 5,000 was an enacted parable, that God has sent down the bread out of heaven; that the manna was a type. Jesus is the fulfillment. He is the bread of heaven. We all heard him say it, I finally, it finally came clear to me, though," because the Spirit was given to help them recall perfectly what was said, and John had more time of walking in the Spirit, ministering, and the Lord used that.

The glory. I mean, again, the healing of the man born blind, he's teaching us something profound there. He's basically teaching us that every one of us are born blind, the

elegance and beauty of what he does in John 8 and 9. Every one of us are children of our father, the devil, after he talks about the Light of the world. We need the truth and Jesus is the Light of the world and he enacts the parable by healing that man who had been born blind. What we need, what you need and I need, is to receive sight from the one who is the Light of the World.

We could go on and on looking at this. The elegance and beauty of how he ties these things together, sophisticated imagery, light and darkness, he picks up on this. Let me show you this. Turn back to chapter 1, verses 6 to 9, well, verse 4 actually. He's talking about the Word, "In the beginning was the Word," verse 1, "the Word was with God." In verse 4, "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him." This is John the Baptist he's talking about, not John himself, John the Baptist. Remember, he doesn't name himself, he's the disciple whom Jesus loved when he's talking about himself.

"He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light." Verse 9, "There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man." John has thought more about what Jesus has done and what God has done in sending his Son and he's come to see Old Testament themes about light and darkness and he sees now Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world," and so he begins his Gospel saying, "The Light has come," and he sees Jesus' ministry as this ministry of light penetrating darkness and this theme, and then he uses it subtly in his narrative with such elegance and beauty.

Let me show you this. Now, we're in John 1. Turn over to chapter 3, verse 1. "Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus," look at that next phrase, "by night." Is there something there or was that just coincidence? I mean, it could have been a coincidence, right, you don't know for sure when you just first look at that one sentence, but when you put it in the larger context, you see, I think there's something very significant about that. Let me show you now. That same discourse leads into Jesus saying in a few verses after that in verse 19, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." Jesus is the Light. The Light has come into the world but men hate the Light and Nicodemus is a man in the dark who comes at night because he doesn't want to be seen coming to Jesus, and also because he's in the dark.

Well, it's more places than just that. Let me just take it to chapter 13, verse 30. Remember, every word is there for a purpose. After Jesus has washed the disciples' feet, he's predicted the betrayal, John the apostle, the one whom he loved, has leaned back against him and he says, "Who betrays You?" He then says, "I'm going to give a morsel," and he gives the morsel, verse 27, he gives the morsel to Judas, "After the morsel, Satan

then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.'" Satan is there inhabiting, personally possessing Judas at this moment. "Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him." They don't know what's going on. They're in the dark too. That's one of the other themes, they never understand what's going on. He shows how that's true. They didn't understand what Jesus meant when he said this. Later they did. John is constantly saying that to show us this whole point. But he goes on down, verse 30, "So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately." Judas goes out. Where is he going? He is inhabited by Satan and he is going to betray Jesus and what does he say? "And it was night." He's going to the ruler of the prince of darkness. It's night.

Then I think it's even there in chapter 20, verse 1, "Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark." We want to know it was early, yes, of course, and "while it was still dark" is early, right? When you get up and it's still dark, it's early, especially in the summertime. But is that all that's going on? I don't think so, not when you put in context of what John is saying. He's saying that until the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the whole world lay in darkness and she comes to the tomb and we find out she's weeping, she's mourning, it's all going to change, what? When she meets the risen Christ.

So John has put this together with such beauty and elegance. Now think about this beyond that, so that's his sort of elegant style, think about the doctrinal just mountaintops he takes us to: his doctrine of Christ, his Christology. His understanding of the person and work of Christ is fuller and more developed than any of the other Gospels. Now, they're all perfect, again, but just ponder that. John is the capstone of the Gospels in the wisdom of God. I mean, he's the one that told us that Jesus was the Word through whom the world was created. That's how he begins. The Word became flesh. He shows us the unique relationship of the one, the phrase that he coins or that he uses drawing from the language of the Septuagint of Genesis 22, Abraham and Isaac, Jesus the one and only Son or the only begotten Son. John uses that. The uniqueness of his Sonship. The dialogue between him and his Father. He says, "My Father." John remembers more of the times when Jesus has said, "My Father," than any other Gospel writer. Now, what happened with John, the Spirit inspired him to remember all of those "My Fathers. My Father is working and I am working." There are so many unique sayings that he remembers under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to give us, to fill in, to sort of back-fill our Christology.

He's the only one who recalls the most exalted sayings of Jesus of all, the "I am" sayings. They all heard them but the Spirit waited for John to give those to us as our treasure. Remember, the "I am" sayings is basically him saying, "I am who I am." That's what God says, "What's My name?" Exodus 3. Moses says, "What's Your name? What do I tell them? Who do I tell them sent me when I go to the people of Israel and say, 'I'm here to deliver you. God has sent me'? You tell me Your name." And he says, "You tell them that I am has sent you." Yahweh is a form of "I am" in the Hebrew and so the name Yahweh or Jehovah basically means, "I am who I am." And when Jesus comes on the scene and says, "Before Abraham was, I am," the Jews understood what he meant. He was claiming to be Yahweh. That's why they picked up stones to stone him to death because they

thought he had blasphemed. They rightly understood what he was saying. He was saying, "I am the I am." They understood that correctly, their problem was they didn't realize he was right when he said it and so they were going to throw rocks against the very God who held their life-breath in his hand.

So John reveals that. The Lord through John reveals those beautiful pieces that come together in sort of like filling in the puzzle of the beautiful portraits of Jesus we have in the Gospels. He's the one that records for us the, "I and the Father are one," saying. "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." But he also records for us the subordination of the Son. This is one of the reasons I shared before I had a conversation that went over about a year with a particular Jehovah's Witness that was coming to my house. It was one of the more experienced guys, an older gentleman, and I think he was trying to bag a really, you know, a Baptist pastor, and it's a shame that he would think he could. But anyway, he comes over a period of time and I said I was preaching through the Gospel of John. It's been since I started that and I was telling him, I said, "You know, you read the Gospel of John, you cannot escape the fact that Jesus is claiming to be God, they understood he was claiming to be God, how can you continue to insist that he's not?" And he said, "The more I read the Gospel of John, the more I see that he's not God." Well, what is he talking about? He's talking about where Jesus says things like, "The Father is greater than I." That's in John. "The words that you hear Me saying are not My own, they are the words the Father has given Me. The works that you see Me do are not My own, the work that the Father is doing in Me." What's going on? Well, the problem is they're not cutting it straight. They've got a half-truth, they don't have the whole truth. The half-truth is there is a subordination between the Son and the Father. The Son is the one who submits to the Father but it doesn't mean he's any less in power and glory and we see that from all the "I am" sayings. We see that from the fact that through him nothing came into being that has come into being. The Word was with God and the Word was God. When Thomas fell on his face and said, "My Lord and my God." John 1:18, "No man has beheld God at any time but the only begotten who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known." The only begotten God who was in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known.

So when you put it all together, that's our Christology. We believe in the eternal Son of God who was and is and is to come, the great I am. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit have always existed in a communion of love. And think about that, where do you get the best doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the whole Bible? John 14 to 16. He remembered all those sayings about the Helper, the Comforter, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and he gives those to us. So we believe what the Bible teaches when you look at Genesis through Revelation and you put all of it together, John completes the portrait of this eternal God who is Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Three in person, one in essence. Each person equal in power and glory yet each performing a different and unique function. That's come through meditating deeply on the word every day of his life and the Spirit then using that meditation to give us his Gospel.

Now like I said last week, when we preach through, I don't know what we're going to do, actually I do know what we're going to do next, I think, but I'm not going to tell you today. Just come back in two weeks and you'll see where, "Turn in your Bibles to"... No,

next week we have John Street here, but anyway the week after that we'll start a new book. Sorry about that, I just lost my complete train of thought with why I said that.

Meditating deeply on the word now and every day. What we should do as Christians is make a commitment to mediate deeply on the word and anticipate the fruit of a disciplined life of meditation. This makes getting old really really good. More time walking with Jesus. More time encountering the difficulties of life that force you into the depths of his word. Luther said that one of the key ingredients in sound interpretation is suffering. The more you suffer, the more you dig, and the more you dig, the more you come to know Christ. And so then this is what God wants us to do, to listen carefully to the words of Christ, to meditate deeply on the words of Christ, and then to speak confidently the words of Christ.

That's the last point and we're going to end very briefly with verse 24, "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true." When you listen carefully, when you meditate deeply, it will enable you to speak confidently and authoritatively because you will be speaking that which you know to be true, experientially you know it because you've been in it; you know it's not your thoughts, it's the word of the living God and when you understand that, you don't need to be apologetic regardless of the political correctness of our day. We believe in a certain truth. There is one way to heaven, it's Jesus Christ. One name given among men by which we must be saved. It is Jesus and Jesus only and it is a right understanding of who Jesus is. It's not just saying that name magically, it's the Jesus of the Bible, the eternal Son of God who became a man, gave himself as a perfect sacrifice for sin, raised from the dead on the third day, who will return bodily to judge the living and the dead. It's repentance and faith in him and him alone. And how do we have that confidence and yet humility at the same time, because it really is humility when you realize that you can step out and speak the truth even though they don't want to hear it? You can do it because he is the one who told it to you in his word and anything less is arrogance. To act like you can't be certain of what God says is true, you can't be certain, that's arrogance.

Listen carefully to the words of Christ, meditate deeply on the words of Christ, and speak confidently of the words of Christ. That's the calling. Abide in his love. Abide in his word. And be faithful to the end.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we are so grateful to you for the treasures that you have given us in your word, the written word which is such an amazing book and yet, Lord, we know that it's amazing because it reveals to us the living Word, and we thank you that you've given us all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ Jesus. Help us to live lives that are worthy. We pray for those that are here today that don't know Christ, that they would repent and believe the Gospel and they would submit themselves to the one way to be saved and that's through Jesus and in coming to him they would find that there is nothing that satisfies like knowing Jesus. Everything we've longed for is found in Christ. And Lord, help those of us who already are yours to so feed upon your word, drink deeply the truths

of Jesus, that we will be people who are more and more satisfied, more and more complete and more and more ready to share his beauty and his glory and we pray this in his name. Amen.