

I. Set Up

A. Today is the fourth of our seven-week series on Jesus from the Gospel of John. During Lent we are focusing on aspects of Christ. So far, we have explored Jesus as: Logos, as man and as rabbi. In future weeks we will look at him as a rebel, a sacrifice and as a conqueror. Today we look at Jesus as an evangelist.

B. This ties in with something we have been talking about over the last few weeks – the term BLESS.

1. Begin with prayer
2. Listen
3. Eat together (share a meal)
4. Mike will be unpacking that a bit more in a moment.

C. Right now, I want to read today's passage. It's John 4:1-26.

1. Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. ³ So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

2. ⁴ Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

3. ⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

4. ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.^[a])

5. ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

6. ¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

7. ¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

8. ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

9. ¹⁶ He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

10. ¹⁷ "I have no husband," she replied.

11. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸ The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

12. ¹⁹“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

13. ²¹“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

14. ²⁵The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

15. ²⁶Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

II. Introduction

A. There are two big ideas that I want to be sure you see today – both are controversial, disruptive and misunderstood. Many people ignore them, or at least try to. That is a mistake. A big one at that. One with long-lasting consequences. These two ideas are way too important to be set aside.

B. Let me back up and get a running start.

1. We are marching through John.

a) We started in John 1, where we looked at Jesus as the Logos (the eternally existent, pre-incarnate, second member of the Trinity) and then we stayed in John 1 to focus on Jesus as a real person (the claim that while he remained fully divine, he became fully human).

(1) That was the week I talked about the hypostatic union and we repeated the Chalcedonian Definition

b) Last week we moved to John 3, where a bunch of different seminary students looked at the idea that Jesus was a rabbi.

(1) By the way, thanks for that - for allowing people to preach their first sermon (or one of their first sermons) to you. This is one of the ways we try to serve the broader Christian community. We are involved in helping try and launch lots of interns into lots of different kinds of Christian work.

(2) Thanks for being part of that. And, as asks go, it was limited. It's not like were expecting you to volunteer to let a surgeon perform their first surgery or something.

2. Today we move into John 4 (with a bit from John 3 as well) – and we are going to explore the idea of Jesus as an evangelist.

III. The word evangelist comes from evangelism:

A. which is from the Latin word, evangelium.

B. Which we can trace from the Greek euangelion.

C. Which means Good News

D. The preface “eu” – which has a very distinct political feel today – means “good.” One hundred years ago, in his famous essay, “On Fairy-Stories” J. R. R. Tolkien tries to give birth to a new word, “eucatastrophe”: that is, a good catastrophe. A surprisingly good thing. Of course, the quintessential examples would be: the Birth of Christ and then, later, his resurrection.

1. These are good disruptions.

E. As it turns out, his word did not do as well as his books or movies. But you get the point, evangelism is related to good. Indeed, it’s about sharing the Good news.

IV. So, back to the beginning: there are two big ideas that I want to be sure you see today – both are controversial and misunderstood. Many try to ignore them. That is a mistake with eternal consequences. These two ideas are of profound importance.

V. The first is that you need to be born again.

A. You need to be redeemed, rescued, adopted into the family of God. You need to be justified. You need to be forgiven, reconciled. You need to place your trust in Christ and become his follower. His disciple.

B. We do not become a Christian by being born into a certain family, by undergoing a certain ritual, by joining a certain organization or by voting a certain way.

C. Christians are not those who try harder or live better. Christians are not distinct because they are smarter or kinder.

D. Christians are those who believe the gospel. Who trust Christ. Who have become Christ-followers.

1. In Acts 16, a jailer asks Paul, “What must I do to be saved? They are at the start of their second missionary journey. Paul has just received the Macedonian Call. They ended up in Philippi where they are planting a church. Paul gets sideways with some people, a riot breaks out. They are beaten and then thrown into prison. They are in the middle part in chains. At midnight – while they are singing – there is an earthquake, their chains fall off and the door springs open and they could easily escape. This would mean death for the jailer. When he sees the door is open he draws his sword to kill himself. But Paul cries out – stop. We are all here.

2. The man realizes that Paul has not run or let anyone else run. He immediately falls on his knees and says, “What must I do be saved.”

a) Paul had been preaching in the prison. The jailer knew he claimed insight into how to rightly follow the one true God.

b) He has seen and heard enough – he wants in. And so he asks, “How do I join your group? How can I become one of Christ’s disciples? What must I do to be saved?”

c) And Paul says: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

3. In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus and he is going back over the Gospel – which he also does in his letter to the Galatians and in most of his other letters. In Ephesians he explains that we are saved by grace (that is, it’s a gift) we do not earn it.

4. In John 1:12 we read that “to all who believed [in Jesus] and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God.

5. In John 3 we have the passage that Billy Graham made famous, he said that God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes has eternal life.

E. I could go on. There are plenty of them. The point is – my point is - there are lots of different ways people get separated into groups.

1. Right-handed and left-handed. Cubs and Sox. Coke and Pepsi. iPhone and Android.

2. Jesus argues – and you are free to say he is wrong, but let's just be clear, this is what he teaches – Jesus argues that the big division is between those who are reconciled with God and those who are estranged.

a) Those who are forgiven and those who are not.

b) Those who are adopted into the family of God and those who are not.

3. And he tells a very chilling story in Matthew 25 where he talks about two groups - the sheep and the goats.

F. All of this raises the question, how do you get into the group that is right with God? There are lots of different ideas?

1. Some do not believe in God or heaven – I would reframe that. In Romans 1 we are told that everyone knows there is a god but some suppress that knowledge.

2. Among those who believe in something else – a god, something beyond this.

a) Some believe everyone is saved.

b) Some believe it is about being good – or of doing extra good to make up for our bad.

c) Some believe it is about being religious.

d) Some believe we are saved by special knowledge or that we can buy r way into heaven.

G. To be clear, the Bible is very clear – we are not good enough and we can not do enough good to earn our way into heaven. That is a dead end. Therefore, we must be rescued.

1. How does this happen? We realize our situation and ask Jesus for help.

H. The process of becoming a Christian happens in a moment.

1. I grew up in a modestly religious home. We went to church most weeks, but it was (oddly enough) not a church that talked about the need to become a Christian. It did not look at Jesus as a Savior. It was more focused on Jesus as an Enlightened teacher or as a moral guide – an example.

a) It did not look at the fact that the main focus of Christ's teaching was Christ. It looked more at his ethics.

(1) People are shocked to learn this. They think of Jesus as being very humble. Indeed he was. No one ever thought so little of his own well being as Jesus. No one was as quick to suffer more for others as did Jesus. No one was as quick to

b) To be clear, we need them both.

- (1) I disliked church. Did what I could to get out of it.
- c) One of the reasons for the Law (Christ’s ethics if you will) is to help us see that we need help – that we cannot be good enough.
- d) This is not the only purpose of the Law. It also serves to show us how to live.
- 2. The process of receiving Jesus may be a process in one sense
 - a) Negative 5 to 5.
 - b) But there is a moment when we cross over. There is an instant at which point the Great Exchange occurs – our debt is transferred to his account and His righteousness is transferred to ours.
- I. You need to cross the line.
 - 1. And if you have not, I will end by giving you a chance to do so.
 - 2.
- VI. But there is a second big point that needs to be made.
 - A. There are three groups listening in. I am focusing on two of them today. I just spoke to those who are not yet Christians and want to be.
 - B. I am about to speak to those who are Christians.
 - C. Let me call a 2 minute time out to say, “If you are listening but do not believe – and are not yet ready to put your weight down – I have a book for you. It’s Mere Christianity.
 - 1. I wrote a book about Jesus and you can have it for free.
 - 2. I was listening to a podcast this week, and David Brooks was being interviewed.
 - a) Brooks is writer for the NYT, some love him. Some hate him. I am not going there. I am only going to note that a few years ago
 - b)
 - c) Only 350 were Mere Christianity
 - 3. My roommate in college came to faith after I gave him a copy of Mere Christianity.
 - 4. Brooks’ book is \$10.
- VII. Now I want to say something to those of you who are Christians. You need to see that others need Jesus – and that means you need to share what you know.
 - A. The Gospel is Good News. The key point being, it’s not good insight. It’s not good instinct.
 - 1. We cannot reason our way to it. We cannot look deep inside ourselves and find it.
 - 2. Someone – a parent, a pastor, a friend, a colleague, a neighbor- someone has to explain it to us.
 - B. That someone is you. That is the plan. That is the expectation. If you are a Christ follower, you are expected to tell others about Jesus.
 - C. To be clear, we do not have the power to make someone a Christian.

1. We cannot argue someone into the kingdom. We cannot shout them down and carry the day. We cannot legislate them into the kingdom.
- D. What we see in the early church is that everyone – starting with Jesus – spends their time inviting people to follow Jesus.
 1. We saw this with Jesus last week – in John 3, he had an remarkable evangelistic conversation with Nicodemus.
 - a) This was a guy who was a religious leader but who didn't really understand what God was doing, and Jesus systematically explained things to him.
 - b) Among the important topics that Jesus covered were the necessity of the new birth, as well as its source; God's love for the world in Christ; faith as the way of receiving God's gift; and salvation as deliverance from eternal condemnation and to eternal life.
 2. We see it also in the John 4 passage that was read. This is a classic text. I remember studying it in college for the first time. Wow, so much there.
 - a) In John 4, Jesus meets with a Samaritan woman by the well.
 - (1) She is very unlike Nicodemus. He was a Jewish religious leader – a man with power.
 - (2) She is a Samaritan woman who many suggest is showing up in the middle of the day because she has been ostracized by others.
 - (a) There is some push back on this.
 - b) The point is, it's a different conversation, but Jesus found ways to relate the Gospel to her. And we see that she comes to faith and then she immediately starts telling others. That is the plan. That is the strategy.
 3. There are other things we learn from watching Jesus interact with people or from the things he taught:
 - a) He connects with people on a personal basis.
 - b) He listened. He treated people with care and dignity. He was bold. He took some social risk.
 - c) What are some crucial elements of Jesus' outreach that we must emulate?
John's gospel brilliantly highlights four things out of Jesus' evangelistic encounter with the woman by the well. First, Jesus was passionate; He cared for the lost. He was weary so He sat down by the well. He wearied Himself in bringing the Gospel to people. He was going to die on the cross to bring salvation so He didn't really have to go and meet the woman by the well. But He did because He cared for her.
 4. In Matthew 4:23, we read that Jesus went around “proclaiming the gospel.” I want to suggest that just Jesus talking about Jesus.
 5. But he was not alone. This is what the disciples all die doing.
 - a) Other than Judas – who ends his life

b) The Gospels – that is, the four books that start the New Testament, that focus on Jesus – were written by the various writers to persuade people to follow Jesus.

(1) Matthew wrote for Jews, Luke for Gentiles, and John for Greeks.

(2) They each shape their work in order to be as persuasive as possible for their audience.

(3) This was not a secret. They tell us. John closes his Gospel saying, “These [accounts of Jesus’ ministry] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

E. Men and women, Jesus tells people they need to accept him. He also tells us to share with others.

1. In Matthew 28, Jesus tells his disciples to make more.

F. The apostles do as well.

1. In 2 Timothy 4:5, Paul tells Timothy to do the work of an evangelist.

G. There are people I am praying for. I have done this long enough to know that you do not often see results, but God moves over time.

1. In college I was one of a few guys who had a goal of sharing the Gospel with all of the guys in the fraternity.

2. I was part of a group that met every day for most of a year in the Student Union to pray for people.

3. Had you asked me

H. More recently, I had made a several year effort

I. Our goal at the moment is low key. It’s BLESS

1. Begin with prayer

2. Listen

3. Eat (share a meal)

4. Serve

5. Then Share

J. Be a friend!

K. You need to see, this is a great opportunity and responsibility. It is not a popular at this moment. It seldom has been.

VIII. So, let me circle back.

- A. If you are a skeptic – get Mere Christianity, or sign up for my skeptics study.
- B. If you are a Christian – take BLESS seriously. You are the plan.
- C. If you are not a Christian but are ready to become one, this is a time to put your weight down.
 - 1. I am going to pray the prayer I prayed years ago. You can pray along.
 - 2. I am not going to ask you to raise your hand or come forward. I am going to ask you to text me so I can help. We'll put up a QR code that you can access, or you can tell someone at the Connection Table.
- D. Right now, let me ask that we all bow for prayer.
- E. And as we start, I am going to
 - 1. “Lord Jesus Christ, I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life (take a few moments to ask his forgiveness for anything particular that is on your conscience). Please forgive me. I now turn from everything that I know is wrong.
 - 2. Thank you that you died on the cross for me, so that I could be forgiven and set free. Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your Spirit.
 - 3. I now receive that gift. Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever. Thank you Lord Jesus, Amen.”
- F. More prayer.
- IX. We have put the QR code on the screen. Reach out to me if you made a decision for Christ and I will be in touch later today with some next steps resources.
 - A. .