

Jesus Christ is the Son of God

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[0 : 00] You will find my text for this evening in the Gospel by John in chapter number 20 and verses 30 and 31.

The Gospel by John chapter 20 and the last two verses in the chapter where the Apostle is written and many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book.

But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

My friends, it's a great privilege for us to be with you here this evening and to share this time of fellowship around God's Word in this lovely congregation.

And I appreciate very much the opportunity that is given to me to have this time of fellowship and of preaching among you and later on this evening of sharing with you in the Congregational Fellowship.

[1 : 33] Now in the fellowship meeting after this service I will be speaking more directly about the some aspects of the missionary work of the church in which we are engaged.

of the free church in Southern Africa.

the church in Southern Africa. It is something I was asked to do when I came over here that I would bring their greetings to you on every occasion when I had the opportunity to do it.

And it's been my joy to do just that very thing. You know, I'm sure that it would thrill many of our people overseas if they were able to be with us this evening and to share in this service to join with such a large congregation in Christian fellowship and Christian love.

And I was just thinking before the service this evening that if there was something that you might like to do as a congregation for your brothers and sisters in the South African church.

[2 : 57] It might be for you to adopt a congregation or a district in our church over there and perhaps establish a particularly close relationship with them so that you would get to know them better through letters and so on which you could write to them.

And they would respond to you so that we would be drawn more closely together. Now, this evening, I want us to look together for some time at the text which I've chosen.

I believe it's an important text for all of us. And I trust that you will give good heed to it because John tells us here why it was that he wrote his gospel.

It so happened that this morning when I was preaching, my text was also from this chapter 20 of John, but not these words. And I was mentioning at that particular time that it strikes me as something very significant that the Apostle John did write his gospel.

Because this gospel appears to have been written many years after the other three were already completed. And although John's gospel is different in many significant respects from the other three, yet he goes over the same story, the life story of Jesus.

[4 : 45] And by the time he wrote the gospel, the Apostle John was probably an old man who had time to reflect on all the events of his long and eventful life.

He hadn't forgotten any of the details of his experiences with Jesus. He tells us in this chapter through the very specific language that he uses that there were times when God enabled him to see things in a way that perhaps Peter, for example, when it was respect to the resurrection, that Peter didn't seem to see perceptively at the beginning.

John would take no credit to himself for that. The Spirit reveals things in the way that he wants to reveal them. But John, obviously, under the constraint and guidance of the Spirit, was led to record the events that we have in this gospel for a very specific reason.

applying the gospel in a very forceful yet winsome way. And this is what he says when he comes to what probably originally was his conclusion before he added more to the gospel.

Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing he might have life in his name.

[6 : 51] Now that's tremendous. That he has written something specifically for you and for me. Out of all the multitude of memories that this gracious old man had concerning his experience with Jesus Christ.

He says, I've selected the things that are here in this book with this express purpose that ye that ye that ye here this evening might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing he might have life in his name.

And oh my friends, if there's one thing that all of us needs right here tonight in this church away there, far away in our African field or wherever it may be, it is life through that precious name of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit led John in his own divine and infallible way to record these things for us that we here this evening would have the opportunity of believing and find life through Christ.

Well then, let us look more particularly at the text to notice first that Jesus Christ is the object of true faith.

[8 : 42] these things are written says John that you might believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now he is not directing us to any set of doctrines or to any number of rules.

Here he's directing us to a person. he's directing us to the most gracious, the most wonderful of all people who has ever lived and he's asking you to come and to consider him, to consider Christ and in looking at Jesus and thinking through all the implications of his life and what he did and what was done through him to believe on him and find life.

There is a story that thrilled my own heart when I first heard the words towards the end of the year before last 1985.

No, towards the end of 1986 just last year and it's a story that I've told in different places where it's been my privilege to speak about the mission work, the story of an old woman.

[10 : 10] She couldn't read or write. She's from a little village on top of a hill it's called Bebula and if you go there to Bebula on any day you'll see people going about their ordinary business hens, pigs, goats and sheep and cattle mixed up with them.

You'll see women going about in heathen blankets you'll see the men going about less purposefully usually than the women in dungaree suits and so on like to see men going about with here.

And this woman came under the sound of the gospel in our little congregation there and she was brought to faith in Christ. I didn't know her well.

She came to the session towards the end of last year asking for admission to the Lord's table and when I was asking her questions I was beginning to wonder just how much of a grasp she had of spiritual things and I asked her this question what part has Jesus Christ played in your salvation?

And she looking at me said which means minister Jesus has done everything for me.

[11 : 43] Jesus has done everything for me. And my friends John is saying the same thing to us this evening in his words.

He's asking you and he's asking me to come and to behold Christ for he is the only one in whom we must place our faith if we are to be saved.

And right through this beautiful gospel of John you will find that what John has been doing is directing our attention to Christ directing our attention to Jesus in many different situations as he met many different kinds of people on many occasions and always the emphasis is on this that this Jesus is the son of God that he is the Christ sent by God to proclaim the gospel of salvation and to make it a reality for people just like you and like me.

Jesus says John at the very beginning is the word the means by which God is making known his purposes and his salvation.

We read in John 3 and 16 and again in verse 36 that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but should have everlasting life and he that believeth on the son shall not see shall not he that believeth not on the son shall not see light but the wrath of God abideth on him.

[13 : 51] it's only in Christ and John wants to narrow your vision down so that you see Jesus only with regard to life and salvation and everlasting hope.

And as John goes on to speak about Jesus as Jesus unfolded the purposes of God in salvation we read that as many as believed on Jesus to them did God give the power to become the sons of God Jesus gave them that power not power the dynamic power but the authority kind of power the new standing before God that we all need if we are to have everlasting life.

And in this chapter in the earlier verses than our text where Jesus appeared to his disciples after the resurrection Jesus sent out his disciples he said as my father sent me so send I you and he said to them take the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit who is the fruit of the great redemptive work of Christ and from Matthew's gospel we read concerning that very situation that Jesus gave all authority to his disciples you see in Christ there is this authority that is only from the son of God it's divine Jesus himself is the son of God you find too and this is stressed in John's gospel that whenever

Jesus speaks of his own ministry he speaks of it in terms of doing my father's will he is the son and he is the son whom God sent as the Christ the anointed messenger bearing the word of God to a lost world now all of these things and there are so many more that we could mention they give us a clear picture of what the old testament showed to us too as the the Messiah the specially anointed messenger of God coming to proclaim the word coming to be the saviour of his people coming to bring life and my friends this evening John is asking us to look at

Christ and knowing that he is the son of God to believe on him and find life through his name the African people amongst whom we work are very family conscious and in their family structure the father is always superior to the son and the African people find it exceedingly difficult to conceive of Jesus Christ as having the same authority the same power the same ability to save as God the father and it worries me at times when I am asking people questions in the session when we are speaking to even the elders in the church about the saving work of Jesus Christ that they seem to consider it almost an inferior thing in comparison with what

[18 : 00] God is and is doing now the Bible doesn't ever bring any conflict between the work of the father and of the son and as our catechism reminds us the son is of equal power and glory with the father but God is saying to us here that it's in Christ and through him and believing on his name that you find life that I find life and that all of us are directed to look to to find that life that is life indeed and these things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God now this is very significant because John was writing at a time you remember

I said that he was an old man now the other three gospels had been written for a long time but John was writing at a time when people were perhaps beginning to question this central fact of our faith and many people are questioning this fact today about the divinity the absolute divinity of Jesus Christ John had no doubts about it and we must have no doubts about it these things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and that believing he might have life in his name well do you believe that do you believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God well if you do what difference has it made to your life is it just a kind of intellectual assent that you've given to this because you've never really questioned the fact before you just accept it as true but my friends it must go deeper than that believing in the

Bible sense is a deep thing and the best example you can find if it is found in this chapter when Thomas believed and he fell at the feet of Jesus and he said my Lord and my God he was completely broken at the feet of Christ and for the rest of his life unshaken in his acknowledgement of Jesus as the master the Lord my Lord and my God and if you come to believe in this Bible way then you submit your life to Christ you yield up your whole way of living unto him you know to make another reference to our African situation there is a tremendous problem at the moment in

African culture it's kind of like I suppose some of the problems that you have on the island here just now the conflict between two cultures and you see the death struggle almost of the old culture and it having to give way to something new in the African set up this is seen in a very sad way you have the breakup of old even tribal moralities which at least kept people within certain bounds and did away with excesses and if people broke the rules they knew what the punishment was but the old laws have gone and people today are adopting western culture the great thing if you were to stand even for five minutes in the square of the town where

I live and just watch the black people passing by the young women dressed in the latest fashions and the most expensive clothes with the most way out hairstyles some of them though are exceedingly smart you'll see many of them driving the latest cars Mercedes Benz cars being the status symbol of those who have got on there's money there but the values that they choose to make theirs are the failed values of our western society you pick up any black magazine and the weight of advertisements is for drink and you'll see pictures of parties in full swing with people drinking from silver goblets you'll see advertisements for all the latest styles of clothing for all the latest makeup in order to make people look less black than they are everything to make them more western and sadly more fallen and our church people find it hard to escape these things too and there's a tremendous need for holiness even amongst our

[23 : 52] Christian people a great need for obedience to the way of Christ rather than to the ways of the world there's a tremendous need for Christian morality sexual morality sexually the nation amongst whom we work the Amacosa people the nation's in a mess completely and utterly and they need new life in Christ but my friends here in Stornoway this evening it's not just for the Africans you need it too and if you're going to believe in John's sense of the word then you've got to submit every area of your life your thinking your words your doing your reading everything has to be subjected to obedience to

Christ so that you will live in a way that is compatible with your professed belief and there must be a willingness on our path to follow where Jesus leads us Thomas said my Lord and my God and if Christ is your Lord then your will is not your own it is his and what he wants you to do must be the goal of your life the way that he wants to take you in life must be the way that you must go you know some people would like to believe on Jesus but to keep it quiet they want the comfort of knowing that well if they were to die tonight because they believed they would go to heaven but they are not prepared openly to profess him and willingly to do what he calls them to do you can't have

Jesus on any other terms than his terms and so you must be willing to place your life at his disposal broken empty so to speak so that he can fill it and use it in his way and be unashamed of being known as one of his people a whole new world is opened up to us a new world of living when we give ourselves to Christ as many as believed on him we read that is believed on him as the Christ the son of God to them gave he the power to become the sons of God people who have God's life in them and who more and more grow into a resemblance of the family to which they now belong he that hath the son has life oh so many people think that coming to

Jesus means giving up all that is happiest all that is life well that's rubbish because what you give up when you come to Christ is the rubbish he never throws anything away that is good for you he never throws anything away that is best he replaces the inferior with the best he brings life in place of the death no matter how attractive it may look it's death unless you know and believe on him so then do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in this way because that's why this gospel was written in order that you might believe on Jesus he alone is the object of our faith and what

John speaks of here concerning life is real life he says these things are written that he might believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and that believing ye might have life through his name I would like to read you an extract from a letter that came to us at the very end of January the 28th of January of this year we received it in the Bible school where I work and this is what a person wrote it's written by a man he was a prisoner in one of our prisons there near East London about an hour away from where I live I don't know why he was in prison but obviously the Lord has been dealing with him there in prison and this man is taking some of the correspondence courses from the

[29 : 34] Bible school and this is what he writes there is no life without God without God life will have no meaning or no aim it is only God who has a meaning for life and leads it to happiness and forgiveness us and we get all that when we give up ourselves to him John wants us to have life and in the land where we work every day you read of people who are causing commotion in the country in the name of liberation in the name of freedom in the name of a new life for the people but friends there's only one way that we can find it at its deepest and most basic level and that is in

Christ and as people say that it is in Christ that we see a new Africa so it is in Christ that you can have a new life and only in Christ and that's why John directs us to Christ this evening and that life for your soul and mine lies in Jesus and we find it when we come to faith in his name now in this gospel we meet a great array of people it's lovely to look through this gospel and see all the different people whom Jesus met in the course of his ministry as John introduces them to us very different characters a good man like Nicodemus a bad woman like the

Samaritan woman a hopeless man like the man lying for year after year after year at the pool of Bethesda the people who came in thousands to listen to Jesus and he fed them by the sea of Galilee a man who was blind from birth and who was made to see Mary Martha Lazarus ordinary folk living in a little town called Bethany different people and all of them no matter how good they were no matter how bad they were they found life when they came to Christ and so will you that's the message of the gospel and none of them would have found life if they did not come to Christ and that's true for you you'll find eternal life life in all its fullness in no one else but in

Jesus you know sometimes when we go to villages in our own area or in the trans sky area we see people who are walking about with a heathen blanket on them and it's very obvious by the way they dress that these people are not Christian people they are covered over with the sign of their non Christianity they are heathen folk but of course in our culture here we're covered over with respectability we're covered over with conventions that sometimes hide the basic needs in our lives and we don't even admit sometimes that we need Christ we seem to say well I've got on well enough without him before why should

I bother with him now oh friends you're missing so much if that's the way you think and I can tell you on the authority of God's word that you're missing everything because to be without Christ is to be dead and to go out of this life without Christ is to be dead everlastingly it's only in Jesus that you have life what does it mean then to have life in Christ it means surely first of all the removing of the penalty of death from us the penalty due for our sin Jesus took that in his own body to the tree when he died in the place of his people it means that Jesus gives us life from himself the great father of the early church

[35 : 04] St Augustine had a lovely way of explaining to people how the trinity had life in itself he conceived of it as a circle of life flowing through the father from the father through the son through the holy spirit in this great fellowship continuous fellowship of life and of love in the God head and when we think of a person becoming a Christian it's as if that great circle of God's life bends down to flow through us and we are so to speak taken up into this eternal fellowship of the life and fellowship of God we have life when we come to Christ and it's found in no other as we've said and this evening I can assure you that if you come to Christ the life of

Jesus will come to you and your whole life will be completely and gloriously changed so that you become a new creature in him and it's only then that you really come to understand what life in all its fullness is truly about because the burden of your sin is lifted the condemnation for that sin is lifted the hopelessness of your life without Christ is taken away and you know that then no matter what happens you you're secure in the Lord Paul reminds us at the end of Romans chapter 8 that nothing in this life and nothing in death or in the life to come can separate God's people from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus the Lord we had an old elder in a congregation with a rather difficult and strange name it's called

Mkako and in this village of Mkako there was an old elder called Mr. Chandu a dear old man and he became very sick and very weak and he had one daughter who was unmarried at this particular time I'm thinking of and the congregation in that place who loved him very much were hoping that he would be able to see this daughter married and that happened they had a wedding she was married to a young man from another village where we have a church the village called Koguan or Knox Mission and then the people prayed that God would take home old Mr.

Chandu they thought there was nothing wrong in this but everything was right he was ready to go he knew where he was going he was becoming a burden to himself he was so weak and sick unhealthy and very soon the Lord answered their prayers and we had a most beautiful funeral for Mr.

Chandu people lamented his passing the good man passed from them and the Lord removed a saint from our midst but they rejoiced too that he had gone home he wasn't separated from God his life wasn't ended in some senses it had just begun and an old relative of his a woman lived in that same place and she was bedridden and pain wracked for years and she said to my wife one day when the women went to worship in her home to comfort her and encourage her it was just after the new year and she said I hope the Lord will not forget to take me this year and it's only when you've got life as it is in Jesus that you could pray a prayer like that you see when you come to him he takes care of everything for living for dying and for the life to come so there is love and life in the

[39 : 53] Lord Jesus Christ real life and I can commend that life to you this evening but finally just let me stress this again it takes us back to the text where John says these things are written that he might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that believing ye might have life in his name when the Bible speaks about life in his name that last phrase is put in there to stand in the place of Christ himself the name stands for the person and here that person is the Lord Jesus that person through whom the lame were made to walk the blind were made to see the sinner woman at the well of

Samaria was given a clean heart dear old Nicodemus was born again by his power and made a new man and my friends this evening you too can find in him who bears that name the same new life that will make a gloriously new person of you do you know the Lord some time ago we had a young man who was studying in our Bible school or studying through the correspondence courses he too was a prisoner in a prison and one day he wrote to me and told me not to send any more lessons and then he went on to tell why he was under the sentence of death and he had received the date for his execution and a few days later we read in the newspaper that he had been hanged along with two other men it gives one it gave one's heart a in the paper because over the months that he had been in contact with us we had got to know him well through his letters and latterly they were full of scripture for it was obvious that he had been born again of the spirit of

God and shortly after he was put to death with these two other men the chaplain of the prison came to see me at Dimbaza to tell me about what had happened and he said that man died believing in Christ and through him the two other men who were executed on that day also went to their deaths as believers in Christ it was just like the thief on the cross and that day they went to be with the Lord in paradise now I'm sure that you're not in the same situation that they were in nor is there any crime to your record such as the horrible things that were in their record but I can tell you this that you need the same

Lord and the same Christ who gave new life to them will give new life to you this evening if you believe on his name may God bless you to do that Amen let us pray together