



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

It Is the Moment of Truth: The Gospel of John Finale

John 21:20–25

Tim Badal | July 31, 2022

Good morning, church. For the foreseeable future, I have the great privilege of saying to you one last time, "Open your Bibles to the Gospel of John." For 44 weeks, we have opened to this Gospel written by Jesus' best friend, the apostle John. John's purpose in writing this was so we could meet Jesus.

Back at the beginning of this Gospel, we met this Man Who was unlike anyone else we've ever known. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (John 1:1). This Jesus we've met is one of a kind. He is the One Who created us and knit us together in our mothers' wombs. He is the One Who had a purpose for our lives even before we took our first breath. This God, this person Jesus, chose to do the unthinkable. In John 1:14 we read, *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."* Jesus met us and interacted with us. He walked and talked with us, laughed and cried with us. He did life with us. We have met Him through what John has told us about Him.

Even more than just meeting Jesus or having a glancing interaction with Jesus, we have also learned from Him. John has told us about many things Jesus did, although John also said He did many other things that weren't recorded (21:25). What we have been told about was given so we would know that this God Who put on flesh and lived among us came so that you and I might have life by trusting, believing and hoping in His death, burial and resurrection.

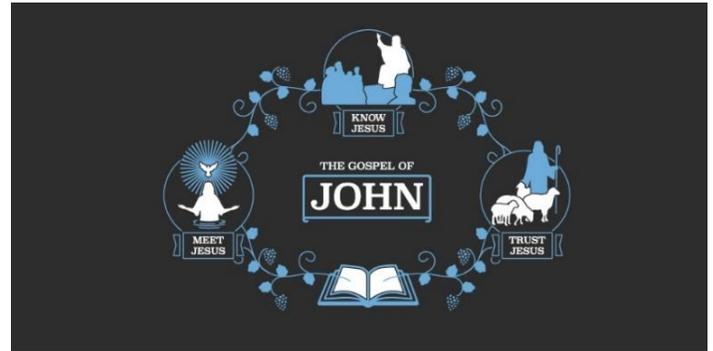
Jesus came so you and I can have life (10:10). Everything points to the reality that Jesus came to save us from our sin. But all of this—meeting Jesus, learning about Jesus and learning from Jesus—should lead us to trust and believe in Jesus. Ninety different times in this Gospel, John mentions that someone should or someone did or someone will believe. What does that mean? It means they will put all their faith and hope and trust in Jesus. It means to take the proverbial eggs out of our baskets and put them all into Jesus' basket. We must believe He is our only answer, our only hope, our only way back to God.

Over the course of 44 weeks, we have sat under the teaching of Jesus' best friend and it leads us to revisit these truths. We could say that everything in the future hinges on that moment in time when you make certain decisions. That moment determines how the other moments in your life will be lived out. For the student, that moment might be final exam time. Did you listen to the lectures, did you take the right notes, did you do all your teacher required in order to be prepared for that moment, that exam, at the end of the year?

Within the relational world, that moment of truth happens when a young man gets down on his knee and proposes to a young woman who now has decisions to make. Will she? Won't she? What's going to happen if she says yes? What's going to happen if she says no? That moment of truth is critical to everything moving forward.

What about in the courtroom? There it's that moment when you stand before the judge, awaiting the words "guilty" or "innocent." Those words will send you on one of two trajectories. Or in the world of business, sometimes the crucial moment comes when you present something to your customer that you've been working on for weeks, months or maybe years. Have you been clear? Has your argument been compelling enough for them to buy the product or service you're seeking to sell them?

When it comes to baseball, probably the most significant moment of truth is at the bottom of the ninth inning. You're down one run. There's a full count and the bases are loaded. What is about to happen in that moment is what everybody pays top dollars to see. Will the pitcher strike him out or will he hit the ball? Who is going to win the game?



Moments of truth like this are crucial moments. Today, at the end of our series on the Gospel of John, we come to a finale that is a moment of truth. After spending all this time in this Gospel, it's important for us to reflect on what we've seen and heard from John, then to ask, "What do we do with this?" John has declared some truths about Jesus and now it's your turn to decide. This morning we need to decide if we will believe in Jesus.

Turn in your Bible to John 20 where we'll be in verses 30-31 for a moment. Here John is giving us the purpose of his Gospel:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these 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 wrote what he did with the desire that his readers would make the conscious decision to put all of who we are into the hands of almighty God. If you believe in Jesus, it means you at least believe a couple things about Him. First you need to believe that Jesus was sent by God, that He was the anointed Messiah, the Christ, the promised One and the true Son of God. Believing that truth about Jesus results in your having vitality, vibrancy and health in your spiritual life.

Now turn to John 21:24. Here is what John has declared to us: *"This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true."* John is talking about himself, certain that all the things he has written are true. He knows what he's seen and experienced and been a part of. John knows that what he witnessed wasn't a bunch of special effects, it all really happened. Now he wants to hand what he knows off to us and is basically asking, "What is your decision going to be now?"

As we see in the rest of the Bible and in the record of history, John dedicated the rest of his life to communicating what he believed. John was younger than Jesus, possibly even a teenager when Jesus died. He eventually outlived all the other disciples, until about 90 A.D. which was about 60 years after Jesus died. For those six decades—even though he was beaten, tortured, abused and finally exiled to a deserted island—John held fast to the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Savior sent to save sinners. John put all his hope and trust in this truth.

So the question this morning is this: will you and I do the same? Let's look at three things actions we need to understand.

Trusting the works of Jesus for salvation

For you who have been around the church world for a while, you might wonder why I said the "works" of Jesus. After all, we've been taught to believe in the one finished work of Jesus on the cross. Yes, that's what saves us. It's what makes our sin white as snow. But let's remember that there were two other men who died on crosses that day, as recorded in John 18. Why then do we pay so much special attention to the Man Who died between them? The answer is, we pay attention to Him because of all He said and did prior to that day. All He did prior to the cross gives us evidence that we can put our faith in Him Who died on the cross. That's why John wrote his Gospel, to declare the works of Jesus.

In fact, John gives us seven signs, seven miracles, that help us see Who Jesus really was, His power and strength, and that He is wholly able to address anything that concerns us. Second, while these miracles demonstrate the greatness of Jesus, they also reveal our own great need. We're a needy people and His miracles point to this.

- In John 2, we saw how Jesus changed water into wine. In doing this, Jesus shows us He's the answer to every one of our disappointments.
- In John 4, we saw Jesus heal a nobleman's son. There we saw how He is the answer to our doubts.
- In John 5 we saw the healing of the man who had been paralyzed for over 30 years. In that miracle, we see that Jesus is the answer to any difficulty you and I face in this world.
- In John 6, Jesus fed 5,000 hungry people, proving He's the answer to every one of our desires. Whatever it is that we yearn for, Jesus is what we're seeking.
- Later in John 6 the disciples got in a boat; while they were at sea they experienced a great storm. There we learned that Jesus is the answer to all of life's storms and despair.
- Then in John 9 we saw Jesus heal a blind man. That showed us that Jesus is the answer to the spiritual darkness that keeps us from seeing God and Christ in all their greatness.

- In John 11 we saw Jesus visit the grieving family of Lazarus, who had been dead for four days. We then saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, and it's here that we're reminded of the truth that He is the answer even to death itself. Jesus is our great God.

However, none of these miracles were the most amazing things Jesus did. Every one of them were temporal. The wine in John 2 eventually ran out. In John 4, the nobleman's son would again get sick. In John 5, the 5,000 whom Jesus had fed loaves and fishes would in a matter of a few hours be hungry again. The disciples would again be on the sea in the middle of storms. And yes, even Lazarus, who was raised from the dead, eventually died again. All of these miracles were wonderful.

Many today say, "I would have more faith, hope and peace if I could see these things happen now." Yet what John was telling us is that these miracles were intended to be signs, or in the Greek, *semeion*. The Latin word for sign is *signum*, from which we get such words as signal, insignia and signature. These signs served as identifying marks, intended to prove something or offer something that needed to be followed. So these works of Jesus were like the dots on a treasure map that leads to treasure. If we connect these dots, we will inevitably get to the treasure we're seeking.

Jesus has declared that He is the greatest and has demonstrated that greatness through miracles which remind us of our great need and that He is the great answer to those needs.

Now the greatest miracle of all time is recorded in John 3. When speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus said He had come so that men and women, young and old, can be born again. In other words, we can experience new life in Jesus Christ. This is the reason God sent Jesus into the world in the first place: to save the world from its sin and to give people new life.

So again, our question this morning—after seeing all these incredible signs and miracles—is this: have you trusted Christ as your Savior? Was there a moment in time, a moment of truth, when you listened to what has been declared about Jesus and you have said, "Yes, I believe"? Have you been able to say, "What I read about Jesus is true and because of that, I'm going to put all my sin, all my life, all my expectations and dreams on Him Who is able to save me from my sin and lead me to life everlasting"? Have you done this?

What an absolute shame it would be if, after almost a year of hearing that Jesus is the Savior of the world, you would come and go, listen and hear, but then only walk away. Jesus says all we need to do to experience the vibrant and abundant life He offers is to believe.

So, brothers and sisters, if you've never done this, you can do that right where you are, right now. You can pray a prayer that simply says, "Lord, I know now that I'm a sinner. I know I'm lost without You. I need You, Jesus, and I believe the words that have been taught to me about You. I believe You are Savior, You are God, You are King. So I take all my life and I give it to You, knowing You can do far more than I can with it. I'm going to follow You wherever You lead me."

When you pray that, it isn't so much the words but the act of submission, Jesus says, "I will come and be your Savior and Lord." If you're praying that today, I would ask that before you leave, you would come and talk to me. Or go to the Welcome Center and talk with them. Or even talk to the person sitting next to you. Talk to someone, telling them, "I have asked Jesus to be my Savior."

I'm going to do something I usually don't do. I'm going to stop in the middle of my message and pray that those who have come to believe in Jesus today would experience the goodness of God, even in this moment. Let's pray.

Father God, I just pray now that Your Holy Spirit would lead and guide people to Yourself. I know there are many people here who have already done this, but in a group this size, there are no doubt some who have never given their lives to You. Maybe someone who is here for the first time today or who has only been coming for a short time. Maybe someone who has been here for a long time. I pray that today would be the day they submit to You.

Jesus, empower them by the Holy Spirit. Give them courage and faith and the grace they need to know You are their Savior, that You love them, that You died on the cross so they might have life and have it in all abundance. I pray they would tell someone about it. I pray they would ask questions, so those around them might lead them to an even greater walk with You in the days to come. We give You the glory for saved lives in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Taking the words of Jesus seriously

Point number two is that believing in Jesus, doing what John says, involves taking the words of Jesus seriously. John wasn't just focused on signs; he also drew our attention to what Jesus said. In this Gospel we find seven "I am" statements by Jesus. We've called attention to these as we've come upon them, but let's see them in their totality this morning. Once again, Jesus is declaring truths about Himself, but there is also something for us in what He says. His words tell us that we are to live differently as a result of encountering Him.

- In John 6 we're told that Jesus is the bread of life.
- In John 8 we're told He's the light of the world.
- In John 10 we see that Jesus is the gate or the door.
- In that same chapter we're told He's the Good Shepherd.
- In John 11 we learn that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.
- He's the way, the truth, and the life in John 14.
- And He is the vine in John 15.

Like the signs we looked at earlier, each of these statements tell us something about Who Jesus is and what He has done. These are more than simply declarations about Jesus, they also tell us how Christ followers are to live. In order to experience the life Jesus wants us to have, we need to take His words seriously and apply them to our lives.

I like what pastor Warren Wiersbe says about these "I am" statements: "The 'I am' statements recorded in Scripture reveal the depths of the Christian life, how God's children can go deeper by living with Jesus in the present tense." We can live with Him right now.

These statements are a roadmap to how you and I can have vibrance and vitality in our relationship with Jesus Christ. As a Christian, we need Jesus to feed us. Just like we need bread in our physical lives, we need bread in our spiritual lives. It's Jesus Who will sustain us and Who gives us the nutrients we need as we take Him in.

We also need Jesus because we're lost. We need light in a dark world. We need to know the way in a world that tells us there are a lot of ways. We need a gate, a door, to enter this life. We need a Good Shepherd to lead and guide us every step of the way, so we can experience His resurrection life in the here and now.

All this involves the final thing we need in John 15: we need to be connected to Him as branches are connected to a vine. We need to abide in Jesus which requires daily interaction. It means we need to be deeply and intimately connected to Him at all times. So yes, these are declarations about Who Jesus is, but they are also a road map to how you and I experience the fullness of Christ each and every day.

The question is now that we have trusted Christ as our Savior, do we take His words seriously? When Jesus says these things about Himself, do we believe them to be true? Think of these as being along a spectrum. Some of us might just take and leave these things. Others may do them in a serious way. If you're really honest, you vacillate between the two extremes. If we take the words of God seriously, we must recognize that apart from Jesus you and I can do nothing. We need to wake up every day taking these words seriously. We realize there isn't a moment, an event or a transaction that we do without the grace and mercy of Jesus. Therefore, we must invite Him in.

As I get up every morning, I invite Jesus into my life, along with my wife and children. I'm inviting Jesus into how I spend my money, how I invest my time, how I utilize the energy and abilities God has given me. If I take the words of God seriously, then it means being with God's people and being involved in God's activities to which He has called me, which are central to my life. Wherever I am—at work, at play, in the home, in the community—everything I'm doing needs to be centered on following Jesus Christ, Who is the way, the truth and the life. It's one thing to say we believe; it's another to live that belief out in action.

So, brothers and sisters, as we close out this series from the Gospel of John, take the words of Jesus seriously and apply them to every part of your life. If you do this, I will guarantee that you will not be saddened or disappointed. John says, "I'm modeling my life after Jesus." Did he mean it was easy? No. Did he mean there weren't hardships and trials? No, there were a lot. But at the end of his writing to the church, in his three letters, John said, "There's nothing greater in all the world than to be loved by God and to live in the light of Jesus."

In this moment of truth, are there decisions or activities that indicate you're living outside the realm of Jesus? If so, He's calling you to bring these back under His sovereignty and Lordship. We need to take the words of Jesus seriously.

Telling the world about Jesus, your Savior

John wrote 21 chapters about his best friend. John had lived with Jesus and the only thing he wanted to do was tell people about that. He dedicated his life to this. He was beaten and abused for it, but it didn't matter because the greatest story he could ever tell the world was the story of Jesus. John wasn't interested in talking about himself or his activities, only about his Savior and Lord. That's why for 21 chapters John has gushed about his best friend, introducing the world to Jesus. He wanted to tell the world because he loved Jesus.

This then leads us to ask if we say we believe, if in fact we say Jesus is the greatest thing that's ever happened to us, then how does this truth compel us to tell the world about Him? How often do we leave this place fired up, then go into our communities, neighborhoods, families, workplaces and schools, not being able to stop telling people about Jesus, gushing about this best friend Whom God sent into the world to save you from your sins and save the world from their sins?

The Gospel of John was not written for us to hold these truths in our grasp and not give them away. In fact, the most evangelistic verse in all the Bible is in the third chapter of the book of John. Jesus, talking to Nicodemus, said this about God: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes in Him would not perish but would have eternal life."*

This verse reveals the greatest Lover Who loved to the greatest degree to the greatest of people. He did so with the greatest of actions, giving the greatest of gifts, enabling the greatest opportunity and involving the greatest simplicity. Because of Him Who is the greatest attraction, we have the greatest assurance that we will not perish. All this makes the greatest difference in our lives, the difference between being dead in our sins and alive in our Savior. This is the greatest difference we can experience in this world. Finally, we have been given the greatest promise and the greatest blessing in all the earth. The answer to the greatest verse in all the Bible is Jesus. So the question is will we tell others? The question is, who needs to hear this?

I did this in the first service and I didn't die. I did it in the second service and I'm still here. So let's do it here in the third service. I asked people to declare a person who needs to hear that message. I'm going to stop talking and give you the opportunity. I'll ask you to raise your hand and say the first name of someone you know, someone close to you—maybe someone you work with, in your family, in your community—who needs this message and gift, who needs Jesus as their Savior. Then we're going to stop and pray for them. Who has a name of someone who needs to know Jesus?

Right down here. Helene, you had your hand up. Okay. Tim. Hopefully not me, brother. Thank you. Gabby. Way in the back. Steve. Right down here. Bob. Okay. Back over there, young man. Debbie. All right. Donnie. In the back. Helen. Thank you. Dennis. Right over here. Michael. Over here, go ahead. Josh. Right behind you. Nina and Phyllis. Michael. Tom. Any other ones? A couple more. McKenzie. Anyone else? Okay. In the back. Nicki. Julia.

Okay, let's take a moment and pray for these individuals.

Father God, we come before You and ask that You would, by Your Spirit, start to make inroads for these individuals. I pray that they might see and experience what we have experienced, what we've seen. I pray they might taste what we have tasted and know that the Lord is good. So, Lord, if it means You've got to bring some trials and difficulties into their lives, we know that can be painful, but we also know You use those trials to bring people to Yourself. Lord, I pray that You would use us and that we would find unique opportunities and experiences to be able to speak to them. Give us courage. Give us the words to say so we will share the testimony of how Jesus has changed our lives and how He can change their lives also.

Thank You for these individuals and their courage; I pray a special blessing on each of these names. I look forward to the days and weeks to come of hearing how these individuals have taken steps closer to believing You and putting their faith and trust in Jesus. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now, let me give you an assignment. For those who have given names, can I encourage you to text those people or call them? Can I encourage you in this week to make a commitment to talk with them about Jesus and share what Jesus has taught you, what He has shown you, what you can teach and show that to others? Amen.

So how do we close out this series in the Gospel of John? We give God glory. God sent His Son Jesus so that we might be saved, so that by believing in Him, we might experience the abundant life God always wanted us to have. Sin has messed it up, but God in His grace and mercy sent Jesus to come and die, so that we can have abundant life and so we might share this life with any and all who will listen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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