

Believe & Live! John 20:30-31; 21:25

CBC Ilderton

Andrew Hall

May 3, 2020

The gospel of John is shallow enough for a child to wade in yet deep enough for an elephant to swim in it. This famous saying has been attributed to many, and yet the reality of it strikes me as true as we come to the conclusion statements of John's account of the gospel.

When we began this book, I asked the question: "Why is this Gospel Account the one that people suggest someone who is curious about Christianity pick up and read?" If you look online, the Gospel of John is published as a stand alone book. You can easily pick up a copy to give away. It is the Gospel Account that people recommend to those who are curious about Christianity and Jesus. And when we come to these concluding verses, John tells us that the reason he wrote this book is so that we would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we would have life in his name.

So the Gospel According to John is a good introduction to Jesus because it is intended to provoke belief. It is a missional Gospel. It is a Gospel that is a great beginning or starting point for people who are new to the Christian faith.

Yet this Gospel Account is also deep enough to challenge us, provoke us, and make us dig into our Bibles even deeper. It has hard sayings for us to consider. It does not give us a simplistic view of Jesus, but moves into the deeps, calling us to swim by lifting our feet off the bottom and find that there is a buoyancy about this Gospel that will make you float.

Because John is a Gospel Account that is both simple yet deep, encouraging belief and provoking mission, we come back to this simple purpose of John: Believe & Live.

Believe!

The whole point of this book is to call you to believe. And the way that it called you to believe was by showing you who Jesus is and what he has come to do.

While the message of believing is simple, the way that John encourages belief is profound. He paints a picture of Jesus as the great I AM. The God of the OT, the God who had delivered his people out of slavery and bondage, came to their leader, Moses, and told Moses that he was a God to be trusted. When Moses asked what his name was, the LORD told Moses that "I AM" had sent him. John has this story at the front of his mind throughout his Gospel because he paints a picture of Jesus as the great "I AM" – the LORD who has come to deliver his people out of the slavery of sin.

Over and over, Jesus makes it clear that he is not a simple person. He is the great I AM. And John picks up this theme and uses seven "I AM" statements to help us to see who Jesus is. What is his heart? What is he like?

I AM the bread of life – Jn 6:35. In John 6, as the crowds were starving in the wilderness, Jesus told them that he is the bread of life. When Israel wandered in the wilderness, the LORD fed them with bread from heaven. Now Jesus comes and he reminds us that we were made for more than bread. Everyone is baking bread in our Covidian Exile, but what we long for is something deeper – the very words of God.

Believe & Live! John 20:30-31; 21:25

CBC Ilderton

Andrew Hall

May 3, 2020

I AM the light of the world – Jn 8:12. Just as Israel had a pillar of fire to light their way during the night, so Jesus comes to us in our darkness. The Gospel is full of light/darkness imagery – people love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. But the light has come to show the way – not just the way to live, but the way to God. Jesus is the flashlight of hope in a world of darkness, despair, hopelessness, and sin.

I AM the door – Jn 10:7. What is the way forward? How do you get in on this great news that there is freedom, life, and hope? You come into the way of life through the door of life – Jesus. He is the door that opens up so much more. Just like this Gospel is simple to read, when you enter by Jesus, you find that there are depths of meaning in this book that amaze you. In the same way, Jesus is the door who opens up life – and as you walk in his ways, he opens up so much more hope and life than we could have ever imagined.

I AM the Good Shepherd – Jn 10:11. What does a good shepherd do? He calls his sheep. They know his voice. And he lays down his life for his sheep. He protects his sheep. He loves his sheep. He keeps the wolves away. He goes and rescues his sheep when they get into trouble. He brings them back. Jesus is that shepherd. Always and forever loving his own. Always pursuing and bringing back.

I AM the resurrection and the life – Jn 11:25-26. When Jesus comes to the grave of his friend Lazarus, what is his heart? It is full of sorrow. He weeps. He sees how sin has ruined us. And then he speaks an effectual word that creates life out of death. He makes people who are dead in sin come alive. He takes the dead heart that has no love for God and makes it beat with life.

I AM the way, the truth, and the life – Jn 14:6. In a world full of competing ideas, philosophies, and truth claims, Jesus says, “Look here!” I am the way home. I am the embodiment of truth. I am life to the full! You want to know what God is like? Look at Jesus. Look at his heart for sinners and sufferers. Look at his love that abounds for you and me. You want to come to God? Come to Jesus.

I AM the vine – Jn 15:5. Do you need your soul to be fed so that you can have a fruitful life that looks more like Jesus? Do you want to have his heart of compassion, love, patience, tenderness, firmness, and resolve? Get connected to him. Remain in him. And he will produce good fruit in your life and will cut off the bits of deadness that steal life.

The portrait of Jesus’ heart in John’s Gospel is a surprising one. Do you feel like your life is a disappointment? Do you feel like you’ve let God down? You might know that Jesus died and rose again for you, but do you know his deepest heart for you?

It is one thing to know the details about someone. You might know their height, eye colour, favourite foods, education, job, hobbies, even their personality profile. But if you were to gaze into their heart, would you know what makes them tick? What drives their heart? John’s Gospel is full of these I AM statements that pull back the curtain and show us the very heart of God. And what we find is a God whose heart beats with love, whose impulse is to move towards you to rescue you, meet you in your deepest pains and sorrows, and bring his comfort.

Believe & Live! John 20:30-31; 21:25

CBC Ilderton

Andrew Hall

May 3, 2020

Do you know what it means to trust him? It is not merely believing facts about Jesus. It is to see his very heart for you and then come to him in your darkness, in your confusion, in your brokenness, in your mess, and say, "Be my everything! I need you!" This is what it means to believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus has come to show us what God is truly like.

This is the simplicity of this Gospel. Don't just know the facts about Jesus. See his heart for people like you and me, and call out to him – Be my everything!

Live!

Not only does John tell us who Jesus is, but he also shows us what Jesus has come to do. John tells us that he did many signs in the presence of his disciples, and not all are recorded. Just like the 7 I AM statements, John picks 7 miracles or signs to show us the heart of Jesus.

In John 2, Jesus arrived at a wedding reception that had run out of wine. When he hears this news, he has six stone water jars filled with water and he turns the water into the best wine.

In John 4, an official's son is sick and he pleads with Jesus to come and heal his son. But Jesus speaks a word and his son is healed.

In John 5, a man who cannot walk is left to a life of helplessness. On the Sabbath day, Jesus comes to the man and tells him to pick up his mat and walk, and he is set free.

In John 6, the crowds are starving, and Jesus takes five loaves and two fish and feeds thousands, satisfying them.

Then, when he has to escape the crowd, Jesus walks on water in John 6, showing that he is stronger than the forces of wind and waves.

In John 9, a man born blind is told that he must have sinned, or maybe his parents did, and that's why he is blind. But what does Jesus do? Again, on the Sabbath day of rest, Jesus makes some mud, puts it on the man's eyes, has him wash it off, and the man can see.

In John 11, Jesus comes to the funeral of his friend Lazarus. He weeps at the tomb, but then calls his friend by name, and Lazarus comes out alive!

John says that there were many more signs that Jesus did in the presence of his disciples. Why these seven signs? Because John wants us to wrestle with something deep. When we think of miracles, we typically think that they are interruptions of the natural order. We have become so accustomed to sin and death that we think that these are natural. But they are not natural. They are unnatural. The miracles that Jesus does are to restore the natural order. Redemption and restoration are evidences that there is a better Day, and in Jesus that day has come. In a world where sickness and disease is spread, where people are reduced to fear and worry, where we feel dehumanized by mask wearing out in public and have to distance ourselves from anyone who comes near, we are told that this dehumanizing experience will become the norm.

Believe & Live! John 20:30-31; 21:25

CBC Ilderton

Andrew Hall

May 3, 2020

But what does Jesus do? He comes close to us in our contagiousness. He touches our infectious wounds. He moves towards the blackness of our hearts. And he rehumanizes the dehumanized. He cleanses the unclean. Why? Because death and disease are not normal. They are unnatural. His miracles reveal that his heart is not drained by us coming to him in our sin, but his heart is filled up with joy when we come in our messiness, our brokenness, our sinfulness and we cry out to him, "Have mercy upon me!"

But lest we think that we don't have a full picture of Jesus, that maybe there's some detail that's been left out that would change our minds about Jesus, John says that the world could not contain all the books that could be written about Jesus. These seven miracles and the seven I AM statements are a little window that let you see into the heart of God. He is not disappointed when you come to him with your messed up, broken life. That's why he came.

For Jesus is the wealthiest doctor who has the cure that you need. His love is seen when you come running to him, pleading to him for mercy. And he is not disappointed when you come to him weak and wounded, sick and sore. He moves towards you. He will touch your infectious, sinful heart and say, "Be healed! Be saved!" Because he came that you would have life, and life to the full (Jn 10:10).

The story of Jesus' healing and saving work can't be contained by books. Why? Because millions upon millions of lives have experienced the loving, healing touch of Jesus. If the oceans were ink, the skies were paper, every corn and wheat stock a pen, and every man, woman, and child were authors, we would drain the oceans of ink and fill the paper of the skies with the stories of Jesus' love and mercy.

Why is this Gospel so great? Because it shows the heart of God, and this gospel is repeated every time someone says, "I believe! Help my unbelief!"