

Many Believed On Him There

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[0:00] I spoke this morning in the adult class and John asked me afterwards, do you always preach observations like that?! And I said, yes, I do.

And I'm going to do that again this morning. I'd like you to turn in your Bibles, please, to the book of John. Book of John, chapter 10. And before I read my text, I want just to give a general overview in the book of John where we are at this point.

I'm going to assume, and I think I can do that, that you're familiar with the gospel according to John and the rather remarkable events and statements that occur.

Remember, first of all, in chapter 10. In chapter 10, Jesus gives this discourse upon himself as likened to the door.

I am the door of the sheep. And he elaborates on that theme. It's the chapter in which he says, My sheep hear my voice. They know me. I know them.

[1:12] And none of them will ever perish. It's the chapter in which we find that him having said those things, the Jews took up stones to stone him for having made himself equal with God.

And as the stones are in their hands, the chapter comes basically to a conclusion. If you think over into John, chapter 11, you have Lazarus.

He whom thou lovest is sick. And Lazarus does indeed die. And you have that remarkable incident of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

So in chapter 10, you have this great discourse. I am the door, the good shepherd of the sheep.

The sheep hear my voice, etc., etc. And the Jews wanting to stone him.

Chapter 11, you have the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Now those two chapters get our attention, don't they? They sweep up your thoughts.

[2:21] And they say, look at this. Look at me. This is important. This is significant. This needs to be paid attention to. And rightly so. But I'm not going to preach this morning on John, chapter 10.

And I'm not going to preach this morning on John, chapter 11. But I'd like you to look at three verses that provide us with a seam between these two big pieces of cloth.

And that's found, if you note, in verse 40, 41, and 42. The last three verses in John, chapter 10.

Here's what they say.

And he went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was at the first baptizing. And there he abode.

And many came unto him. And they said, John indeed did no sign. But all things whatsoever John spake of this man were true.

[3:25] And many believed on him there. Let me just give you one piece of counsel before we even begin this morning.

And that is, read all of the Bible. And by that I don't mean necessarily begin at Genesis and don't stop until you get to Revelation.

Of course I would mean that. But I'm meaning this when I say that this morning. Don't just read the fancy stuff. Don't just read the underlined stuff.

Don't just read the monumental stuff. For instance, what happens in John chapter 10 or what happens in John chapter 11. Do indeed pay attention to those.

Of course you will. But read all the Bible. Because here's a little three verses that are just the seam. It says, alright, here's how we get out of chapter 10 and here's how we get into chapter 11.

[4:26] It's just a little transitional statement. A small little paragraph. A seam in the midst of and between these monumental events on either side.

But if you didn't read this little paragraph, I think you'd miss something. It's overshadowed, isn't it? By the large things that surround it.

But I'm going to ask that we look at it this morning. And I want to have you to note that there may be more there than you think. Which is the primary reason why you ought to read the entire Bible. Don't pass by those passages which seem to not contain anything. Demand that they do contain something. Because the word of God is profitable.

And even this. And so we have this passage. There's not much that's amazing here. In terms of, or perplexing. Jesus went away beyond Jordan to where John had been baptizing.

[5:27] You remember John the Baptist? Preaching out there in the wilderness. And he went there and the people said, you know, what John said was true. And many believed on him there. And now let's get busy and get on to Lazarus being raised from the dead.

No, let's stop there. Just for this morning. Now I have a number of observations that I want to draw from this seemingly small text. Which provides a seam.

Between 10 and 11. And I'm going to tell you at the beginning. I have nine observations. But I'll do them quickly. But perhaps you can see that I'm not clever enough to make fancy outlines.

And so I just make observations. And they're numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 that I can deal with. All right.

The first thing I would have you to learn from this passage is that there is neither courage nor piety. Standing in harm's way when it may be avoided. There's a kind of pietism which thinks that when trouble comes your way you ought to stand there and just take it.

[6:34] Because that's what Christians do. I would have you to read the Gospels carefully and you will find that's not what Jesus almost ever did. And when he was faced with opposition.

He ordinarily turned and walked away. And that's exactly what he does here. The Jews had stones in their hands.

At the end of John chapter 10. They were ready to throw those stones at our Lord. And what did he do? We'll look back at verse 39.

They sought again to take him and he went forth out of their hands. Verse 40. And he went away.

You see that? I would like somebody to do this. If anybody is willing to do it. Read all the four Gospels and count the number of times that Jesus departed. It's not the kind of thing you can do by just looking under the word departed in the concordance.

[7:35] You need to read and find out in so many words. How many times do we find Jesus? Sometimes because opposition faces him. Other times things are going quite well.

And yet he leaves and goes away. Paul does the same thing in the book of Acts. Opposition confronts him. He goes away. Goes to the next place.

Somebody count that up for me. I mentioned I've got a group of young ladies in my church. Which I call the church chicks. And I was telling John this morning.

I had hoped to gather a whole lot of young men. By having these church chicks. Because it happens. You build them and they will come. In fact I told him I was going to write a book entitled Church Chick Evangelism.

The trouble is these guys come. Take one of my church chicks. And marry them. And take them away. So I shot myself in the foot. By starting my church chick.

[8:42] Why did I say that? I can't remember what I was getting at. Anyway. Oh I know. I asked my. I just said. Off the cuff.

One day. Because studying the doctrine of creation. And I said. I would like someone to read the entire Bible. And find how many times. God who created heaven and earth.

Is brought forward. As a significant argument. And the next week. My church chicks had taken the Bible. And divided it up. Among themselves. And had read the entire Bible.

And gave me a list of 163 places. Where the doctrine of creation is significantly brought forth. Okay. So maybe someone here would do that.

How many times do you find Jesus departing? He did not think there was some sort of piety involved. In standing there. And taking it on the chin. He says. It's not my time.

[9:36] I don't need this. And he left. And the idea of standing there firm. And taking it. Is not necessarily a wise thing to do. And it certainly doesn't have any precedent.

It seems. In the word of God. There is neither courage. Nor piety. Standing in harm's way. When it may be avoided. Next year.

When you have the U.S. Open. The golf tournament. The U.S. Open. If you watch it on television. Not this month. But a year from now. It's going to be held at a golf course. About one mile from my house.

And. When it's there. You will watch it on television. If you're interested in golf. And you'll find that it's right on the Puget Sound. And between the golf course. There's nothing between the golf course and the water.

But railroad tracks. That run across. Well. Almost. Where that golf course is. On those very railroad tracks. A couple of years ago. There was a report. That a man was hit.

[10 : 36] By a train. And killed. Standing on. The railroad tracks. Now. If you get killed. Standing on the railroad tracks. You deserve it.

All right. You know. Trains go on those things. And. If you stay away from those things. It's very unlikely.

You're going to get hit by a train. They can't. Trains can't go anywhere they wish. They have to stay on those things. All right. And so I thought it. It's not funny of course.

But it's a little odd. That a man got hit by a train. Standing on the tracks. Duh. That's what's going to happen. Isn't it? Well. You stand on the tracks. You're going to get hit.

You know what makes sense? If the train is coming. Get off the tracks. And that's exactly what Jesus did. I can see you have stones in your hands.

[11 : 31] You're about to stone me. I'm not ready to die yet. And so he left. Because there's neither courage. Nor piety. Standing in harm's way. When it may be avoided.

Walk away. The second thing I would have you to notice. Is that there is no likelihood. Found in geographic. Or demographic profiling.

You may not be aware of this. But there in evangelical America. There's a lot of emphasis put upon. Judging where churches ought to be.

Well we ought to have a church in this place. And the reason is. We've done a study. And geographically. There aren't many other churches nearby. And demographically. The kind of people that live there.

Are those most likely to be interested. In the starting of a new church. And they do studies. They really do. Of where the most likely places are. For churches to be established.

[12 : 34] Now I notice in our text. That the Bible says. That he went away again. Beyond Jordan. Beyond Jordan.

Now I've never been to this so-called. Holy land. And I have no intention. Ever going to the so-called. Holy land. Maybe you've been there. I've seen pictures though.

And do you know what it's like. Beyond Jordan. Nothing grows there. There's no produce. There's no population.

There's no prospects. When you see him going. Beyond Jordan. You have to say. Who knew. Why would you ever go there. There's nothing there.

There's no likelihood. No demographic. Or geographic profiling. Would have ever suggested. That anything would ever have happened. Beyond Jordan.

[13 : 31] It is a wilderness. And yet that's where Jesus went. Why is there a church in Bremen, Indiana? I mean let's face it.

Why is this church here? You can't explain it. I mean you can look back at the history. Of how this church came into being. But at the end of the day. Why? Why here?

Why is there a church in University Place, Washington? A good solid 1689 Reformed Baptist Church. No one could ever have anticipated it. Demographing profile.

Demographic profiling. Geographic profiling. Does not determine where the people of God will be found. Not at all. It doesn't work that way. Jesus went beyond Jordan.

And we're told many believed on him. There. Beyond Jordan. Alright. The third thing that would have you to mark from this passage. Is that election can never be exhausted.

[14 : 32] It says that he went beyond Jordan. To the place where John had been baptizing. And I don't know if the translation that you have. Emphasizes this as perhaps it ought. But there's the word again.

There at the beginning of verse 40. And he went away again. It's there and it ought to be there. Now you might have stood by and you say that Jesus.

You see him going across the Jordan. Beyond the Jordan. And you say. You know. Don't go there. John has already been there. John.

A great preacher who said that men ought to repent. And bring forth fruits unto repentance. And pointed away to Christ as being the Lamb of God. And so on and so forth.

John's already been there. If there's any of God's people to be found. John's already found them. John was a great man. And John preached there for who knows how long.

[15 : 27] And as he was doing so. If there was anyone out there beyond Jordan. That was one of God's elect. Chosen in him from before the foundation of the world. If there were any people out. There's not many people out there to begin with.

And if there were any people out there. That were going to be God's people. John's already found them. Okay. So don't go there. It's already been covered. But notice Jesus went there again. Do you know why? Because election can never be exhausted. You know some still call New England the burnt over area.

Because of Charles Grandison Finney's new measures. And the so-called second great awakening. And all that went on in that. And that basically turned much of New England.

Either into atheism or Unitarianism. And still to this day. It's a very difficult place for the gospel to go. But you can never burn over a place so much.

[16 : 29] Or cover a place so thoroughly. That you can say there's none of God's people left. In that place. And notice that Jesus went there again. To where John had already been.

Because election. Cannot be exhausted. Men may chase the gospel from their precincts. But they can never chase the gospel out of the world.

Number four. Observe please. That a great deal may be learned. About a man. By watching where he goes. In troubles and times.

Where he repairs. In troublous times. Where do you go when you're in trouble? You run home. Run to the bottle. Run to the therapist.

You run here, there, and everywhere. Where do you go when you're in trouble? Where do you go when there are troubles around you. And surround you. Where do you go to find relief?

[17 : 33] It's a telling thing about you. To find out where you go in troublous times. Now John chapter 10 ends with trouble. These Jews have the stones in their hands.

And they're ready to kill our Lord. It tells a great deal about him. As well as us. Where he went. In troubled times.

It says that he went to the place where. And he remained there. Where John had first been baptizing. I find that he went back. To a place where two significant things had happened.

Number one. He went back to the place where the word of God. Had first been preached. And number two. He went back to where the sacrament of baptism.

Had first been practiced. Back to where first Christ had been announced. And where men had been baptized. Men and women probably had been baptized.

[18 : 36] On account of their repentance. And looking forward to the coming of Christ. A great deal can be told about you. About where you repair. In troublous times.

And I would submit to you. Look at what the Lord Jesus did. He went to the place where the word had first been preached. And where the ordinance had first been practiced. The word.

And sacrament. That's where he repaired. In order. To recover himself. Before the next event.

Notice please in the fifth place. That where the gospel has been preached.

There is a common grace. Left in that community. John had been there preaching. Jesus returns. The gospel had been preached there.

Jesus recognized that there is something of an atmosphere of common grace. Jesus. In a place. Where the gospel has been preached. Remember. Remember. That at this time.

[19 : 33] John had been dead. For two years. Two years ago. When this is written. When we are in this passage. Two years had gone by.

Since John has been killed. By Herod. And yet Jesus continues to go back there. As a matter of fact. John is mentioned four times in the gospels.

After his death. And he's mentioned five times. In the book of Acts. 20 years after his death. All the way to 20 years after his death.

In Acts chapter 19. John just won't go away. As a significant figure. And he left behind him. Beyond Jordan. An atmosphere of common grace.

Because the gospel had been preached in that place. Spurgeon once said. There was the river Jordan still flowing on. A hallowed influence lingers.

[20 : 34] About the scenes of faithful labors. And I wonder not that our Lord sought retirement. Where every ripple of the river. Repeated the Baptists testimony.

Beyond Jordan. It's natural to have fond memories. Of significant places. A place where Jesus had been baptized. A place where John had first preached the gospel.

And announced the coming of Christ. There's a common grace left in that vicinity. In 1983. I went to England. And I was left there.

Errol Hulse. You may be familiar with that name. I went over. He asked me to come. I went to the Cary Conference. And then I was to preach in the church in Cookfield. There south of London.

The problem was that I arrived on one day. And Errol left on vacation the next. So I was left by myself. And I went into London. And walked around to see some places that I wanted to see.

[21:41] I went to Bunhill Fields. Which is the dissenting cemetery. I went to the British Museum. Only to see a couple of manuscripts. And then one of the places that I circulated in those three days.

A man told me that I walked at least 60 miles. I was afraid to get on any public transportation. Because I didn't know where it would take me. So I walked everywhere. But one of the places I wanted to go in London was Westminster Chapel.

Westminster Chapel is the name of the church where Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones preached for all those years. And probably you're all familiar with Lloyd-Jones. And I went to Westminster Chapel.

Walked there. Went to the front door. And it was locked. And so I went around through an alley. And found a door. It said office on it as I recall. And knocked on the door.

And finally someone came. And I said, I am so and so from America. I'm a great admirer of your former pastor, Lloyd-Jones. I was wondering if I could come in and just see the auditorium.

[22:46] And the man was very kind. And he said, of course, come in. I walked down several hallways and finally into the general auditorium. It's a beautiful place, actually. It's made for one thing.

For preaching. The pulpit is out toward the congregation. And there's a great gallery that goes around in circular fashion. It's a beautiful place.

And I went there and I asked the man as I was looking. I said, would I be permitted to stand in the pulpit where Lloyd-Jones stood? And he said, of course you may.

And not only did he say I could, he turned and left. And I was there by myself. And I went up and I stood. And I was not a fan of the man who was the pastor there then. But it was the place where Lloyd-Jones had stood all those years and preached the gospel there in London.

And I'll tell you what, it was moving. There was a common grace, I think, in that place. And I think that's why Jesus went back to the place where, do you notice what the text says?

[23:51] To the place where John had been baptizing. He realized there was a common grace in that place.

The sixth thing I would have you to learn from this passage is that the preaching of the gospel is always to be preferred to the working of miracles.

Do you believe that? The preaching of the gospel is to be preferred to the working of miracles.

Now, I don't know. I've known John for 20 years or more. I've never seen him work a miracle. Now, maybe he does it for you. But he's never done one for me.

And I think probably he's never done. I've never done a miracle. And you know what? I really don't care. And I really don't want to. Because I do believe that the preaching of the word is preferable to even the working of miracles.

[24:53] Notice the text. Jesus comes. And the first thing that the people say is what? John did no sign.

John did not work any miracles. But what he said was true. Preaching is always to be preferred to the working of miracles.

Do you notice how this is turned absolutely on its head nowadays? People want miracles and they don't have any preaching. I'd rather have preaching and you can have the miracles.

I still remember there was a sign not far from my house. And the sign read, it was always there, so you saw it every time it went by. It was a permanent sign.

And it had the name of the church. And it said, Miracle Service Every Day. Except Thursday. And I thought to myself whenever I saw that, you can really schedule these things.

[26:00] And you can even tell God, not today, not today, only on Thursdays do we not have miracles. You know, preaching of the word, the hearing of the word of God, is preferable to the working of miracles.

The people said, John did no sign. Why did they say that? Why would you say that at a time like this? John didn't do any miracles. But what he said was true.

And that's more important. All right? Preaching of the gospel is always to be preferred to the working of miracles. Number seven. Preaching is to be preferred.

Now listen to this. To the physical presence of Christ himself. Do you believe that? You might have been with me on number six.

Preaching the gospel is always to be preferred to the working of miracles. But do you also believe that the preaching of the gospel is preferable, at least now, to the physical presence of Christ himself?

[27 : 07] He must have thought so because he left. And he left us with what? The spirit of God blessing the preaching of the word. He says, if I don't go away, you won't have that.

And for now, that's better for you than me to be physically present with you. You know, I read all the post-Reformation reform dogmatics.

And they got away from Rome in the sacramentalism and transubstantiationism of the Lord's Supper. They moved away from that. But they still continue to always want to talk about what they call the real presence of Christ in the Supper.

I have no idea what they're talking about. The Supper itself is a symbolic preaching of the gospel. We'd rather have the preaching of the gospel than Christ himself here.

Notice that Jesus is present with them. He comes, and whatever this limited population was beyond Jordan, Jesus himself comes to them. And what do they talk about?

[28 : 15] John. The preaching of John. Jesus is there. Physically present. And the only thing they talk about is John's preaching. You could be offended at that, couldn't you?

Hey, I'm here. It's me. And they say, John did no sign. But whatsoever things he said were true. I'm here, and all you can do is talk about John's preaching. That's because preaching is preferable now to the physical presence of Christ.

In fact, as far as our text leads us, notice this. Jesus didn't say anything. There's no word recorded. He didn't have to say anything.

Do you know why? John already had said it. And they remembered it. Spurgeon once said, Miracles will not convince. We do err if we believe that Christ's bodily presence and the repetition of his miracles would be of any value.

The kind of faith which merely outward signs produce would not be the faith of God's elect. No signs.

[29 : 26] And even the physical presence of Christ. Preaching is always to be preferred in this world. The eighth thing that I would have you to note is that that witness is best, which leaves the preacher in the background.

That preaching is best, which leaves the preacher in the background. Now, John is a very interesting fellow. I did a study that lasted, I think, nine months, maybe more.

And it was just entitled, Lessons from the Life of John the Baptist. He's one of my favorite guys. There's a lot of people in the Bible whose lives I have studied.

And some of them, even the ones that are most popular, I could never shake hands with them. I didn't understand them. Joseph, for example, preached all the way through the life of Joseph.

And I still don't get that guy. I don't know. I can't get inside his head. It doesn't make any sense to me. Samson, I understand. Joseph, I don't. I don't know why.

[30 : 32] But the guy that I like the best is John the Baptist. I like him through and through, all the way. But you notice that these people beyond Jordan may have kept track of John, as long as he was still alive.

But you notice they don't say anything about his dress or his diet. Remember John ate locusts and wild honey. He was a kind of a mountain man out there in the wilderness.

They didn't say anything about his dress or his diet. They didn't say anything about his clash with the clerics or with the king. They didn't say anything about his doubts when he was in prison or even his death.

The only thing that they remembered was his preaching and that it was true. And what was good about John is basically everything about him faded into the background.

And all that was seen was the truth that he declared. And any preacher that's worth his salt wants exactly that to happen. He wants to fade into the background. And so that they say the things that

John said were true.

[31 : 35] All the rest they seem to not have had occasion to remember. As a matter of fact, they made three assertions about John's preaching. Number one, it was accompanied by no miracle.

Number two, it was all about this man. Whatsoever things he said about this man. And number three, it was true.

And in fact, it was all true. Three assertions about John's preaching. Remember, Jesus is standing there with them. And they're only making assertions about John's preaching.

What John said about him being the Lamb of God, being the baptizer with the Holy Spirit, being the bridegroom of the church. All of that was true.

And John was left in the background. Now, the ninth and last thing that I would have you to note this morning is that it takes years to measure the full effect of gospel preaching.

[32 : 41] We live in a day when we want instant results, don't we? We want to see the conclusion of matters right on the cusp of them having happened.

But the gospel isn't that way. It takes years to measure the full effect of gospel preaching.

Remember, it had been two years since John had been there beyond Jordan.

John has been dead for two years. But it says in verse 42, And many believed on him there.

Now, as far as we're aware, Jesus hasn't said anything. How was it that they came to faith? And the answer is, they'd been listening to John.

And now it all began to make sense. And the repentance that John had preached is now wedded with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because repentance is always the nearest antecedent to faith.

[33 : 39] It says that they believed on him then and there. Then and there. Finally, the full effect of John's preaching is realized. But it took years for it to happen.

If you're going to be interested in the gospel, you need to be patient. Because the full and final effect of it may be years in the future. If you're discouraged today about a loved one, a child, and you think it just doesn't seem like it's going to happen, they're going to remain unconverted.

I just have lost all hope after all these years. Don't do that. It takes years for the full effect of the gospel to be seen.

And I think that may be illustrated in our text. Initial results, whether promising or disappointing, must await the testimony of a day far removed from the time when the gospel is preached.

You know, Spurgeon once said, I am quite willing to be eaten of the dogs for the next 50 years, but the more distant future will vindicate me.

[34 : 49] You need to wait to see what God ultimately has in mind. John's been dead two years, but many believed on him there.

Now, see, nine observations, it's not too bad, is it? We moved through it rather quickly. And I want to thank you. It's an honor for me to have been here today.

I trust that God would be pleased to bless his word and to grant us something of what we read in our text this morning, that God would be pleased beyond anything else to bless the preaching of the word and that ultimately we would see many believing upon him then and there.

Let's bow together in prayer. Father in heaven, again, we come to you and thank you for the gathering of God's people on this, the Lord's day, for which we thank you too. Thank you for the preaching of the word, that it's better than miracles, and that whatever we have attempted to do today, we pray that if you would bless it, we would do more than we expect.

Bless that there should be in this place a harvest yet unseen and grant us the patience to wait to see it. Commit ourselves then into your hands with thanksgiving in Christ's name.

[36 : 13] Amen.