

THE
WITNESS
of JESUS

Sermon Notes

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ABOUT THESE NOTES

The Witness of Jesus forms the basis of this six-week sermon series. You and your congregation will discover how Jesus' "I AM" statements can apply to us today. As you depend on the Holy Spirit for illumination and ways to apply the truths about Jesus, you will grow in wisdom and holiness. Trust God to make you and your congregation more effective in ministering to the needs your contemporaries. He will not disappoint you!



Week 1

THIRST NO MORE!

John 4:1–42

INTRODUCTION

Doctors and other health care workers advise us to drink plenty of water. We need to stay hydrated, they tell us, and water helps with digestion, circulation, saliva production, transportation of nutrients, and the maintenance of body temperature. But neither the most expensive nor the purest water can assuage our thirst forever. Only living water from Jesus can do that. It is absolutely heavenly.

In John 4, we read about Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman who came to a well to draw water, but after meeting Jesus, she left the well with living water. It is a story of how she gradually came to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior.

SERMON OUTLINE

I. Jesus' Witness to Himself (John 4:1–26)

A. It Was Courteous

For centuries the Jews harbored prejudice against the Samaritans, and avoided any contact with them. However, Jesus did not observe racial prejudice. He purposely traveled through Samaria to get from Judea to Galilee, probably because he wanted to lead Samaritans to salvation (vv. 1–5).

Tired and thirsty from his journey, Jesus stopped at Jacob's well, where he met a Samaritan woman and politely asked for a drink of water (vv. 6–8). The woman was surprised that he asked for a drink because he was a Jew, and a Jew would not speak to a Samaritan (v. 9).

By showing respect and courtesy we may prepare hearts to receive the good news about Jesus.

B. It Aroused Curiosity

The Samaritan woman must have found it difficult to go to the well repeatedly to draw water, especially at noon when it was so hot. But noon must have been the only time this woman of bad reputation could avoid insults from other women. They would choose a cooler time of day to get water.

Jesus told her he would have given her living water if she had asked him (v. 10). She was curious. How could Jesus provide this water? Was he greater than Jacob, who had provided the well (v. 11)? Jesus assured her that he could provide water that would assuage

thirst forever and become an artesian well in a person's life (v. 13). The woman requested the living water so she would never have to return to Jacob's well (v. 15).

"Call your husband," Jesus said (v. 16).

"I have no husband," the woman replied (v. 17).

Jesus pointed out the fact that she had been married five times and was now living with a man out of wedlock (v. 18). How did Jesus know this? The woman perceived that he was a prophet. However, she tried to avoid the sin problem by putting up a religious façade (vv. 19–21). Jesus knocked down the façade by telling her what true worship is (vv. 22–24).

When the woman spoke about the coming Messiah (v. 25), Jesus said plainly, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he" (v. 26).

II. The Woman's Response to Jesus' Witness (John 4:28–29)

A. It Was Dramatic (v. 28)

In her haste to share the good news about Jesus, the woman left her water jar at the well and rushed back into town. She had found living water, and that had become uppermost in her thinking. The earthly water didn't matter to her at the moment.

When people come to Christ for salvation, their values change (2 Cor. 5:17; Phil. 3:4–9).

B. It Was Simple (v. 29)

The woman told the men of the town about her meeting with Jesus, and invited them to see him for themselves. "Could this be the Messiah?" she asked.

"See for yourselves" is a good way to bring people to Jesus. We can simply tell what he has done for us and invite them to see for themselves who Jesus is.

III. The Results of the Woman's Witness (John 4:30–42)

A. Positive (vv. 30–41)

The men went to Jesus, and many believed in him because of the woman's testimony. They even invited Jesus to stay with them, which he did for two days.

B. Personal (v. 42)

Those who believed in Jesus did so not only because of the woman's testimony, but also because they were personally convinced that Jesus was the Savior.

CONCLUSION

Many people are thirsting for something to satisfy the soul. They look for satisfaction in materialism, pleasure, worldly philosophy, empty religion, and in other things, but they cannot find satisfaction. It is found only in Jesus. We cannot believe for others, but our excitement about who Jesus is and what he has done for us may persuade some to investigate for themselves. When they do, they are likely to be amazed and believe in him as their Savior. Let's witness eagerly and winsomely!



Week 2

DOWN BY THE SEASHORE

John 6:16–29

INTRODUCTION

Seashores often bristle with activity. On hot summer days, people crowd beaches, vendors of chairs and umbrellas do a brisk business, small groups toss beach balls, kids build sand castles or wade in the surf or collect seashells, and the aroma of sunscreen wafts through the air.

The events in John 6:16–29 took place down by the Sea of Galilee’s seashore.

SERMON OUTLINE

I. Jesus Was Committed to the Will of God (John 6:15)

The crowd that Jesus had fed wanted to make him their king, but he had come to earth to embrace a cross not a crown. He said, “For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

Jesus came to Israel as a king (Luke 1:32–33), was rejected as a king (Mark 15:12–13), died as a king (Matt. 27:37), and will return as a king (Rev. 19:16). However, when the crowd tried to make him its king, it was not time for Jesus to be king, so he withdrew to a mountain by himself (John 6:15).

II. Jesus Draws Near to Us in Our Distress (John 6:16–21)

The disciples were in peril (John 6:16–18). According to Mathew 14:27–26 and John 6:19, they thought they would perish. However, when they saw Jesus walking on the water, Peter got out of the boat and started walking to Jesus. He began to sink, though, when he focused on the storm (v. 17).

We, too, begin to sink when we see the darkness of our trials, but Jesus sees through the darkness. He calmed their fear, entered the boat, and immediately they reached the shore (vv. 20–21).

III. Jesus Reveals Life’s Highest Priority (John 6:22–29)

Soon the crowd that Jesus had fed crossed the lake and found him (vv. 22–25). But were they seeking a Savior or free handouts? Verse 26 answers the question. See and believe or believe and see?

What is really important? Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, and fires can destroy even the most expensive structures. Thieves can steal expensive possessions. Overwork can wreck a family or take away our health. Jesus placed the highest priority on eternal life (v. 27) that must be received by faith (vv. 28–29).

He is the Bread of Life, who satisfies our hunger forever (v. 35).

CONCLUSION

You will never see a trailer follow a hearse to a cemetery, because death separates us from all our possessions. However, death separates believers in Jesus, the Son of God, from all pain and sorrow. Upon death believers enter the presence of Jesus in heaven.

It is wrong to pay only lip service to Jesus and hope to receive health and prosperity from him in return. We must repent of our sin and believe in Jesus as our Savior. Is he your Savior?



Week 3

JESUS OPENS BLIND EYES

John 9:13–41

INTRODUCTION

Ten million people in United States are blind or visually impaired. One million people older than forty are blind. Eye doctors tell us blindness is increasing as computer use increases.

Physical blindness affects life for as long as a person lives on Earth, but spiritual blindness affects life for eternity if it is not corrected.

John 9 includes the story of the healing of a blind man by Jesus. He not only opened the man's eyes, he also gave him spiritual sight.

SERMON OUTLINE

I. Various Opinions about Jesus (John 9:13–24)

It is absolutely essential to know what to believe about Jesus, but many people have little or no convictions. When asked, "What do you believe?" a man replied, "I believe what my church believes." When asked, "What does your church believe?" he replied, "It believes what I believe." "What is that?" he was asked. He answered, "We both believe the same thing."

A. Some Pharisees Condemned Jesus

Some of the Pharisees believed Jesus had broken the law by healing the blind man on the Sabbath (vv. 13–16).

B. Some Pharisees Questioned that Jesus was Sinful (v. 16)

C. The Blind Man Thought Jesus was a Prophet (v. 17)

II. The Stubborn Refusal to Believe in Jesus (John 9:18–23)

A. The Jews Refused to Believe the Healed Man Had Been Born (vv. 18–34)

When they asked the parents about the blindness, they suggested they ask their son who had healed him. They feared professing faith in Jesus would result in their excommunication from the synagogue (vv. 18–23). So they summoned the former blind man and questioned him (vv. 24). Resolutely, the man testified that once he was blind but now he could see (v. 25).

Sarcastically he asked his interrogators whether they wanted to become Jesus' disciples (v. 27).

B. The Pharisees Responded with Insults (vv. 28–34)

III. The Rest of the Story (John 9:35–41)

A. Jesus Led the Former Blind Man to Saving Faith (vv. 35–39)

B. Jesus Tripped Up the Pharisees in Their Own Words (vv. 40–41)

He had the judgment to make moral and spiritual decisions. His judgment was that the unbelieving Pharisees had chosen to be spiritually blind.

CONCLUSION

There are none as blind as those who will not see. The Pharisees had clear knowledge of the blind man's healing, but they refused to believe in Jesus. Perhaps you have had clear knowledge of Jesus' power to remove your spiritual blindness and give you sight, but you have closed your mind and heart to the Savior. Why not end your refusal to believe? Repent and believe in Jesus today.



Week 4

THE SHEPHERD AND HIS SHEEP

John 10:1–11

INTRODUCTION

The Bible mentions sheep more than five hundred times from Genesis 4:2 to Revelation 18:13. Sheep are mentioned in the books of law: for example, the Passover; in history (1 Sam. 17:34); in poetry (Ps. 23); and in prophecy (Isa. 53:6). When Jesus spoke about sheep and shepherding, his audience was acquainted with the subject and would readily grasp the imagery.

Jesus called himself—the Good (intrinsically good, competent) Shepherd.

SERMON OUTLINE

I. The Good Shepherd (John 10:1–6)

A. He Knows His Sheep and They Know Him (vv. 1–6)

Jesus used figures of speech to describe his relationship to his people, and to describe the Pharisees. He called the false shepherds, the Pharisees, thieves and robbers because they used and abused the people of Israel for personal gain.

B. He Protects His Sheep (vv. 7–10)

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is the gate by which the sheep enter (v. 7). A dutiful shepherd would lie down at the entrance to the sheepfold to protect the sheep. All who enter the sheepfold by the gate—Jesus—are safe and well fed. False shepherds, who want to steal and kill the sheep, summon the sheep in vain, but Jesus gives his sheep life.

II. The Giving Shepherd (John 10:11)

A. The Good Shepherd Lays Down His Life for His Sheep (v. 11)

The Good Shepherd gives life—abundant life—based on his sacrifice. He voluntarily died to save us (Gal. 1:4). In Old Testament times, the sheep died for the shepherd as a sacrifice for sin, but Jesus, the Good Shepherd, willingly died for the sheep.

B. The False Shepherd Abandons the Sheep (John 10:11–13)

False shepherds are interested only in what they can get from the sheep. They do not care for the sheep. They are the savage wolves Paul warned the Ephesian elders about (Acts 20:29).

Treasury agents learn to detect counterfeit money by becoming thoroughly acquainted with real currency. Any bills that do not match their real counterparts precisely are identified

as counterfeit. The best way to detect false shepherds is to expose their teachings to the teachings of truth—the Scriptures. If we know the Scriptures well, we will know the Good Shepherd’s voice and follow him.

CONCLUSION

Sheep would wander aimlessly if they didn’t have a good shepherd. If you feel lost, perhaps you are, and you need Jesus the Good Shepherd. He died for you and lives to protect and guide you. Will you repent of your sins and believe in him today? The Bible promises “that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).



Week 5

CALLED BACK FROM DEATH

John 11:32–44

INTRODUCTION

The subject of death is extremely unpleasant, but death is inevitable. Therefore we should not shy away from the subject. We sorrow when a loved one dies, but it helps to know Jesus understands our sorrow and has gained victory over death (1 Cor. 15:57).

The account of Jesus' visit to the tomb of Lazarus comforts us and fortifies our faith in Jesus as the victor over death. We don't have to fear death if we know the keeper of the keys.

SERMON OUTLINE

I. Jesus' Sorrow When a Loved One Dies (John 11:32–40)

A. It Was Personal (vv. 32–37)

Mary was right to observe that Lazarus would not have died if Jesus had been present (v. 32). No one ever died in his presence. But Jesus had waited for Lazarus to die in order to direct glory to God and himself (vv. 1–4).

We catch a sense of Jesus' personal sorrow as we read verse 33. He wept along with Mary and the other mourners. He felt their grief! Verse 35, "Jesus wept," is the shortest verse in the Bible, but its message is long on significance. Jesus must have wept, not only because Mary and the others were mourning, but also because he was greatly disturbed by sin's toll on the human race.

The Jews understood that Jesus loved Lazarus, but they could not understand why he had not kept him from dying (vv. 36–37).

On page 86 of *The Witness of Jesus*, author Kenneth Schenck offers insight into mourning. He writes: "Logical answers are rarely consoling, even though they make sense. But it helps to know that Jesus is crying with us. . . . When we endure the death of someone dear, it is not only the hope of resurrection that consoles us, but the presence of Jesus mourning with us."

B. It Was Deep (v. 38)

"Deeply moved" (v. 38) may mean "groaned" or "angry." Jesus may have expressed his sorrow in groans, or his sorrow may have been related to his anger over the damage Satan and sin had afflicted on Lazarus.

C. It Was Consolable (vv. 39–40)

When Jesus commanded those who stood nearby to remove the stone from the tomb, Martha voiced concern. She said Lazarus’s body would smell bad because he had been dead four days (v. 39). However, Jesus reminded her that she would see God’s glory if she believed. Her grief would not endure forever, because Jesus was about to perform a miracle. He would raise Lazarus from the dead.

II. Jesus’ Supplication at Lazarus’s Tomb (John 11:41–42)

A. The Assurance with which He Prayed (v. 41)

First, Jesus prayed and thanked his Father that he had always answered his prayers. God would not disappoint him.

B. The Reason He Prayed (v. 42)

Jesus prayed for the benefit of the mourners. He wanted them to witness Lazarus’s resurrection and believe that he, Jesus, had come into the world on a mission from God (v. 42).

III. Jesus’ Power over Death (John 11:43–44)

A. He Raised Lazarus (vv. 43–44)

Jesus called out to Lazarus by name, and Lazarus responded by exiting the tomb (vv. 43–44). No doubt, if Jesus had said simply, “Come forth,” all the dead would have left their graves at his command. Someday, he will raise all the dead: believers to eternal life in resurrected bodies (1 Cor. 15:49–54) and unbelievers to eternal judgment (Rev. 20:11–15).

B. He Freed Lazarus (John 11:44)

Lazarus hobbled out of the tomb with grave clothes wrapped around him. However, Jesus freed him from his tightly bound grave clothes by commanding those who stood by to remove the grave clothes and “let him go” (v. 44).

Jesus still frees men and women from whatever binds them. John 8:36 declares: “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

CONCLUSION

It has been said that death and taxes are certain, but Jesus has taken the sting out of death for all who believe. Also, he sympathizes with us when we grieve, and someday he will reunite us with our Christian loved ones and friends who have preceded us in death. We will experience a grand reunion in heaven.



Week 6

THE GREAT I AM

John 14:6

INTRODUCTION

Wouldn't your hope of eternal life be vain if the founder of your religion lay dead in a grave? However the Christian's hope is lively and certain because Jesus conquered death, arose from the tomb, and lives forever. But Jesus has always lived. He lived eternally before creation. He is the great I AM.

Jesus used the name "I AM" to identify himself as the one who called and commissioned Moses from the burning bush (Ex. 3:14). Also, he said Abraham rejoiced to see his day, and he identified himself as the I AM even before Abraham was born (John 8:56–58).

When he comforted his disciples regarding his imminent departure from them, he used the name I AM again. He said, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

SERMON OUTLINE

I. I Am the Way (John 14:6)

A. To God

Jesus told Thomas, "No one comes to the Father except through me" (v. 6). Such dogmatism and exclusiveness may be politically incorrect today, but it is theologically correct. Jesus always told the truth.

B. The Only Way to God

"All roads lead to heaven," is a common expression, but all roads do not lead to God. Jesus is the only way to God. Good works do not lead to God (Eph. 2:8–9). Sincerity does not lead to God. Religion does not lead to God. The apostle Peter told an assembly of religious leaders, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The apostle Paul wrote, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

A person may sincerely believe he can swim from New York City to England, but he will not arrive at his destination. Similarly, a person may sincerely believe she can reach heaven without believing in Jesus, but she will not arrive there.

II. I Am the Truth (John 14:6)

A. Jesus Spoke the Truth

Titus 1:2 tells us God does not lie. Our hope of eternal life rests on this fact. Jesus, the Son of God, does not lie. Grace and truth came through him (John 1:17). When Jesus told Nicodemus the new birth is a necessity, twice he said, “I tell you the truth” (John 3:3, 5).

We may not always trust a politician to tell the truth, and even the news media may fail to report events truthfully, but Jesus always spoke the truth.

B. Jesus Lived the Truth

The common people heard Jesus gladly because he spoke with authority and lived what he preached. He never sinned, but always pleased the Father. Even his enemies could find no fault in him. They tried him in court on false charges. Pilate said of Jesus, “I find no basis for a charge against him” (John 19:4).

III. I Am the Life (John 14:6)

A. Eternal Life

Jesus’ life did not begin at Bethlehem, although his earthly life as a human being began there. He has always existed, and he will always exist because he is eternal. Revelation 1:8 quotes him as saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega . . . who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.” Because he is eternal, he can grant eternal life to all who believe in him (John 3:14–15; 10:28; Rom. 6:23).

B. Abundant Life

Jesus also possesses abundant life. He was able to offer the Samaritan woman abundant life—“a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14). The Christian life is not boring; it is joyful and fulfilling. “Rejoice in the Lord always,” Paul wrote in Philippians 4:4.

CONCLUSION

An artist painted an image of an abandoned farmhouse at sundown. The house looked dark, dismal, and lifeless until the artist dipped his brush into yellow paint and dabbed a window with the yellow. Suddenly the mood changed. Life had entered the old farmhouse.

Life without Jesus can be drab, empty, and meaningless because of sin. But when Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life, enters a person’s life, everything changes. He takes away the darkness caused by sin and gives light, forgiveness, joy, and purpose.