

Anything surprising, strange, amazing or that you would want to know more about?

Over the past few weeks we have been working our way through John's gospel. We have seen that John likes to give clues and signs about who Jesus really is. Last week we saw that the Judeans – the Jews who lived in the South of Israel and Jerusalem - understood these signs much better than we do and, because of that, they had decided that Jesus was claiming to be God and therefore had to be killed.

If you were asked, "What do you want most out of life?" I wonder what you would answer. In fact, why don't you have a think about it for a minute. Now take a moment or two with someone sitting close to you and tell them what you want most. You never know, they might be able to tell you how to get it!

Story about looking for the right office – I knew what I wanted but I didn't know how to get it! So many people are like that today.

Later in this chapter Jesus said that John the Baptist had testified to the people that Jesus was the son of God. He then says that if they understood what he was doing they would understand that it was God's work he was doing. However, they are unable to understand because they do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah. He says that the Bible, or at least for them, the Old Testament, is something they have studied because they think that knowledge of Scripture brings life. Jesus says they've got it entirely wrong because they have misunderstood and failed to believe that he is the Messiah they've been looking for, and that it is him who brings life.

In our reading today, Jesus said that he only did what his father told him to do. Now that is quite complicated because the father and the son are different, but the same. Jesus is both God and human at the same time, and so it's important for us to see that what he does is not based on his own human relationship and interaction, rather, it is based on his relationship with his father in heaven.

This means that when we read the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John what we see Jesus doing reveals that he is God. That's important because Jesus says that both Father and Son are to be honoured in the same way. He is essentially claiming to be God. In John 5:24 he says, *I tell you for certain that everyone who hears my message and has faith in the one who sent me has eternal life and will never be condemned. They have already gone from death to life.* What he means is that they are so closely linked that to hear Jesus speak is the same as hearing God the Father speak. There are two steps here: hear the message and believe – believe that what he claims about himself, and what the bible authors tell us, is true. The outcome is that the person who hears and believes has eternal life and no condemnation – and it's instant: *they have already gone from death to life*

That's what we represent in baptism, that move from death to life. One of the pictures that the bible gives is that before we have faith in Jesus we are all dead, spiritually dead. It is only believing that Jesus really is God's son that brings new life.

Vs 25 *I tell you for certain that the time will come, and it is already here, when all of the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God. And those who listen to it will live!*

Jesus is not talking about the physically dead here – he's talking about people who are spiritually dead. In other places in the bible it is clear that is everyone who does not believe in Jesus. But look what it says – those who listen to Jesus will live.

He says that a time will come when even the physically dead will hear his voice and rise from death. Vs 29 *Those who have lived the right way will walk out into a resurrection Life; those who have lived the wrong way, into a resurrection Judgment.*

So, what is the right way to live? It cannot simply be about being a good person – because we have just heard that people are spiritually dead. It starts by hearing the story and believing in Jesus. That's when we move from death to life – John 3:16-18 “*This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. By believing! It starts with believing and notice that it is for anybody. Who doesn't want to have whole and lasting life? Who wants a life of insignificance and failure? If you do come and speak to me after the service because there is so much more to life with God than without. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger (sometimes churches, or people claiming to be Christians really enjoy pointing an accusing finger – and if you have ever been on the receiving end of that I'm sorry), telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again (you see, when the world was created everything was perfect and humans were created to live with God, but they chose to disobey what God said and ever since we have been separated from God by sin. That's what Jesus came to put right – he came to restore the relationship we can have with God). Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.*

I wonder if you are here today and you are under a death sentence and you didn't know. It doesn't need to be that way. In John 10:10 Jesus, talking about being a shepherd for people who act a bit like sheep, says: *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

Jesus offers life to the full. Another more modern translation puts it like this: *I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.* That's what's on offer and it comes through hearing and believing. Perhaps you absolutely disagree with all I've said, or don't have enough information to decide, or you've been asleep for the last 10 minutes! Each year we offer an opportunity to spend some time meeting together with some food and the chance to chat and ask questions about the big issues in life – it's called the Alpha Course and it has been run in every continent in the world. It currently running in 169 countries, is available in 112 languages and has been tried by 24 million people worldwide. So, it's not just us making something up, it is an established course and it is very informal. There is no pressure to agree or accept what is being said, and it's free. You don't need to have a church connection, in fact, it's often better if you don't because some church people think they have all the answers!

Video

Beth wanted security, identity and acceptance which she realised her friend had in a way she didn't. She said, “I met Jesus and my whole life changed.”

Maybe you are here today and you have seen that change in Jacqui and you're wondering what's happened to her. She's going to come in a minute and tell you but while she's coming up I want to invite you to our Alpha course, details of which are on your little card. You never know, your whole life might be changed for the better.

