

Jesus Messiah, Lamb Of God

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[0 : 00] I think that's the effect of having two mics next to each other. Thanks, Ben. That was great. John, wonderful passage, a long passage.

And I encourage you guys to open your Bibles and follow along with me because I'm going to be going throughout to explain and to teach what God is seeking to communicate to us through it. And this past year, last year actually, I read a book.

It was a New York Times bestseller called Word of Mouth Marketing by a guy named Andy Cernovitz. And in the book, he makes a bold claim. And he says that the traditional advertising... And the reason for that, he says, is the advent of the Internet and the proliferation of blogs and reviews online have made it very easy for the consumers to have the power to shape an image of a product.

So in the past, you could have a really shoddy product and then mask it with really good advertising, glamorous advertising. But nowadays, you can't do that because there will be blogs and reviews that expose that.

[1 : 15] You can only have honest advertising. And because of these reasons, customer service becomes a premium. It becomes a must that you have, really good customer service. It becomes...

They don't want to minimize negative word of mouth marketing. And that's why I think, in part, a lot of these large corporations and companies nowadays try to get in on the discussion of the trending topics and get involved in charity work, right?

Because they're trying to build their image, trying to build a brand so that people talk about them in a good light. And that becomes, for them, word of mouth marketing. And I don't know if you guys remember from last year, Starbucks attended something like this in order to get into a conversation about race discussions, right?

They started something, a campaign called Race Together. And then they encouraged their baristas to start conversations with their customers and write something on the cup to discuss the problems about race relations in America.

Unfortunately, that backfired, right? Because people, most of them, they just wanted to pick up their quick box, you know, cup of joe and go to work and didn't want to have a heavy morning conversation with a complete stranger at that, right?

[2 : 23] So they left. And because... And what they were trying to do was to get in on this national buzz because everybody was abuzz about this and wanted to talk about it.

So they wanted to get a slice of that publicity pie and then build their image as progressive and healthy and promoting the social good. That's what they sought to do. But people saw through it, right?

They saw it for what it was and called it inappropriate and opportunistic. And because the campaign didn't stem from a settled conviction, but rather from a calculated strategy, a marketing strategy, as soon as it became unpopular, they quickly abandoned it, right?

Now, their ill-founded campaign was this attempt to create positive word-of-mouth movement. And in a culture like this, it was a byproduct of a culture that values authenticity and seeks authenticity, but is inauthentic to the very core.

It's... They're supposedly... Even... They care more about public perception than personal conviction, right? And so in that kind of society, these kind of... Even the word-of-mouth marketing that's supposed to be authentic has seemingly become a gimmick and a strategy.

[3 : 37] And when we see that, we become cynical and we begin to ask ourselves, then is there anything anymore that is worth truly being excited about? Is there anyone anymore that is really worth the hype?

Right? There is. And in John 1, 19-51, we see the beginning of the most successful word-of-mouth movement in the history of the world.

It begins with the few people that are described in this passage where they begin to talk about something, someone, rather, of supreme, surpassing, transcendent beauty and value and worth. And they begin talking about it. Begin telling people about it. Begin in the first century, and now, two millennia later, it boasts 2.2 billion adherents today. And by recounting this story, John, the apostle, Apostle John, wants us to...

wants to invite us to this. He wants us to come and see the Son of God who gives us access to God. Come and see the Son of God who gives us access to God.

[4 : 47] And he's going to tell us that, invite us in that, by telling us about Jesus' identity, Jesus' promise, and finally, Jesus' invitation. So his identity, promise, and invitation.

So follow along with me in verse 19. Because we had talked about the prologue. We were in the prologue of John's Gospel last week where the apostle said that John the Baptist came as a witness.

He was not the Messiah. He came as a witness. And now, in this verse, he begins to tell us exactly what the nature of that witness was. So verses 19 to 23. Follow along with me as I read it.

And this is the testimony of John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? He confessed and did not deny, but confessed, I am not the Christ.

And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? He said, I am not. Are you the prophet? And he answered, No. So they said to him, Then who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us.

[5 : 45] So what do you say about yourself? He said, I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said. So we see here that a delegation was sent out to interrogate John the Baptist.

So we know that this is probably from the Sanhedrin, which is the ruling kind of elders or judges who ruled on religious matters that pertain to Jews in the various cities.

And they were largely controlled by the family of the high priest, which is why they're a group of Levites and priests that were sent to Jesus to question him. And they wanted to know about John the Baptist's identity.

That was their ostensible question. So who are you? And in John, the apostle, it can get confusing, so keep those straight. Apostle John and John the Baptist. Apostle John can't be more unequivocal in his report of John the Baptist's answer.

He's saying, He confessed and did not deny, but confessed, I am not the Christ. That's very emphatic. So John the Baptist said, No, definitely not him. I am not the Christ. I am not the Messiah.

[6 : 47] He confessed, he denied it. Lest anyone think that John the Baptist, that special prophet who seemed to have authority, is someone that they've been waiting for. Lest you think that he's the Messiah, John is very clear, No, he confessed it.

He didn't deny that he's not the Christ. In the same way, if you go to a jewelry shop, the diamond's always placed on, I mean, most cases placed on a plain white cloth. That's to showcase the real brilliance and color of the diamond.

It's a backdrop. In the same way, John the Baptist functions like that in Apostle John's gospel. He's the backdrop. His ministry was temporary. It was transitory.

Yeah, it was not permanent. And Jesus' ministry, on the other hand, is ultimate. It's significant. It's permanent. And for that reason, it brings him and Jesus' significance into sharp relief by comparing him to John the Baptist.

So then, given John the Baptist's plain denial, he's not the Christ, the delegation continues their interrogation. They say, What then? Are you Elijah? He said, I am not. Are you the prophet? And he answered, No.

[7 : 49] So first century Palestine was pregnant with this Messianic expectation. Everybody was looking for the Messiah and searching. And one of the possible people that they were expecting was Elijah because according to 2 Kings 2, Elijah had never died, but he was taken up straight into the heavens.

And so in the end times, they expected that he would come back because there was a prophecy in Malachi that said that Elijah would come to prepare for the day of the Lord. So they were expecting an Elijah.

But John the Baptist says he's not the Elijah. And similarly, the prophet refers to a prophecy in Deuteronomy 18 where Moses prophesies that someone like him, God will send a prophet like himself to lead God's people and to speak to them about all that God demands of them.

So people expected a prophet like Moses to come in the end times to redeem. But John answers in the negative for both cases. And that's really interesting because, well, Moses, we understand because John the Baptist is definitely not the prophet like Moses because Jesus was and other Gospels make that very clear.

But Elijah, the other Gospels make it very clear that John the Baptist was in fact the Elijah that was supposed to come and make way for the Lord and prepare for the Lord. But according to this passage, John doesn't know that.

[9 : 08] He's clueless about his own identity and call. Even though he knew very clearly he was supposed to prepare the way for the Lord, he self-consciously was not aware that he was that Elijah that was prophesied about.

And that, I think, could be an encouraging thing for us because, I mean, Jesus basically made more of his ministry and his life than he himself did. And oftentimes in our ministry, in our service, in our lives, we can think the same way.

We can say, well, what I do is not significant. You know, what I do is just a little small thing. But in God's omniscient perspective, can you imagine John the Baptist going to heaven and finding out I was the Elijah?

I mean, talking to God. I mean, the work that you do, the service that you do in his kingdom, you cannot, you know, you cannot underestimate the significance of that because God only knows and we will not know until we get what the implication of that, what the effect of all that we do for the Lord was.

So then John self-consciously does not identify as Elijah or the prophet like Moses. So then, they're still curious. So then, who are you? They ask, verse 23. We need to give an answer to the people who sent us because we're accountable.

[10 : 20] So what do you say about yourself? And John the Baptist finally gives his answer. He says, I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, making straight, the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.

See, even though John didn't identify as Elijah, he knew that he was supposed to prepare the way for the Lord and making straight the way of the Lord is a metaphorical way of talking about, you know, basically paving the new roads, improving the road system for the king to come, for God to come.

So he talks about leveling, so he's leveling the valleys and then, you know, raising down the hills and straightening out the curved roads so that, in order to make way for someone to come.

Because when God Almighty comes, when the creator comes, the creation, he's not going to bend toward creation. The creation is going to bend for him. The valleys are going to rise, hills will be flattened, and the curved roads will be straightened out, and he will walk.

That's what he's talking about. In the spiritual sense, John the Baptist believed that that was his call, to prepare that way for God to come. And apparently, even though he gives a very good answer, the delegation is still not satisfied.

[11 : 26] So now we get a closer look at what they're really after. Verses 24 to 28. Follow along with me. It says, Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, Then why are you baptizing if you are neither the Christ nor Elijah nor the prophet?

John answered them, I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.

And we learn here that the delegation that was sent from the Sanhedrin were made up primarily of Pharisees. So they were the group that belonged to the theological sect of the Pharisees that were very concerned with meticulous observation of every minute details of the law.

And they were not satisfied with John's answer. They're asking, Why are you baptizing if you're not any of these eschatological figures? If you're not the Christ, you're not the Elijah, not the prophet, then what right do you have?

Why do you have to baptize these people? But you see, the problem was not with baptism itself because Jews were aware and practiced baptism. They practiced what they called proselyte baptism, meaning that when a Gentile decided to become a Jew, decided to follow God, they would baptize them.

[12 : 40] And usually, the baptism was self-administered. People baptized themselves. Now, then immediately, you notice two things that are very different about John's baptism. John's baptizing people himself.

He's not letting people baptize them. He's baptizing them as if he's something special. So that's why they're wondering, why are you baptizing them yourself? But even more controversially than that, perhaps, is the fact that he's baptizing Jews.

These are Jews. They are God's people. They are not converting to anything. They are not, why are you baptizing these people? What right, what warrant do you have to baptize these Jews?

Obviously, John's making a statement, right, that repentance is for all.

All need to come to repentance and faith. So then, so John, in essence, is saying, and his response is so characteristic of John the Baptist. He says, well, you think me baptizing them, myself, with water, baptizing Jews, you think that's a big deal?

Well, guess what? Someone standing among you who's going to baptize with the Holy Spirit, with fire, with the very Spirit of God, he's going to baptize you, right? And so John the Baptist, this is consistent in his pattern in his life, right?

[13 : 51] You try to make something about him, and you try to ask him questions, make him the focus of attention, make a big deal of what he's doing, and it just bounces right off, deflects right off, and goes directly to Jesus.

He says, guess what he's doing? Look at what he's up to. Look at who he is, right? And that's Apostle John's concern here as well. No, John the Baptist is not the main character in the story. Jesus is. So look to him, that's precisely what John the Baptist would want, because he says this, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.

I mean, if you understand the cultural context of that statement, that's a staggering statement, an extraordinarily humble statement, because in that age when John the Baptist lived, the precedence and age, seniority, that was everything, right?

People who came before you, people that were older than you, people who had more experience than you, they accorded greater honor, significance, and way to all of those things. So when John says, he comes after me, that's significant, because not only is John the Baptist older, but he is older, he's been in the ministry far longer than Jesus has, and Jesus comes after him, yet he says, of this person that comes after him, he's not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal.

[15 : 09] And in this context of discipleship, of rabbis, and disciples following the rabbis, the culture believed that a disciple, a follower of a teacher, a rabbi, should do everything that a slave does for the master.

So go fetch things for him, go do things for him, go prepare, wait on him, prepare food for him. They were supposed to do everything that a slave was to do, that they expected the disciples to do for their teachers.

Except one thing, untie the strap of the sandals of the people. That, they thought, was so beneath the dignity of a person that they believed that only a slave should do that.

Not even the disciples should do that for his teacher, only a slave. Yet John doesn't make an exception even for that. Not only does he not make an exception, not only is he ready to remove the sandals off Jesus' feet, he says he's not worthy to untie the straps of Jesus' feet.

And obviously, there's a lot of things we could apply to ourselves in that great example of humility, right? It's the attitude that says, I will do anything for the Lord. Whatever you would have me do, God, I will do it.

[16 : 26] Or do we have, instead, an attitude of entitlement? You know, that I can do, but that, no, I will not stoop to that level. I will not serve you in that way.

I will preach at the pulpit for you, but I will not go downstairs to teach children's ministry. I will stand on the stage to lead music in public, but I will not be in the background preparing sound.

Do we have that kind of attitude in time, or do we speak, or do we like John does? I will do anything for you. In fact, I'm not worthy to do any of these things for you.

someone that walks into church, it's easier to talk to a nicely kept, you know, a lady or a gentleman that walks in.

What if a homeless person walked in disheveled, smelly, right? Do we go up to that person the same love, speak to him, love that person, right?

[17:31] Are we ready to say what John the Baptist is willing to do anything that he tells us to do? Yes, so John the Baptist's humility is certainly instructive for us, but as I mentioned, he's not the main character, right?

Because what he's saying is true. It seems amazing, relatively speaking, but what he's saying is precisely true. He is not worthy to untie the sandals off Jesus' feet, right?

As we were just singing about, we tread where angels fear to tread, by grace alone, right? We have no right to approach God. We have no right to serve God. We don't even, we can't even bear to be near God because of our simpleness, because of our dependence.

That's what, that's how actually the German philosopher Immanuel Kant defined humility. He said, it's a proper perspective on oneself as a dependent and corrupt agent, right?

Humility is simply a proper view of ourselves. It's a right view of ourselves, recognizing that we are dependent beings, we have a derivative experience, I mean, existence from God and we owe everything to him and we are sinful.

[18:37] We cannot approach him on our own and that's the position of humility that we must be in. So, John simply has a correct estimation of himself. He knows. And if that's the case, then who then is this Jesus?

who is this man that is so supremely worthy that what John the Baptist says, probably the greatest prophet before Christ to say, I'm not unworthy to untie the sandals with his feet.

And that's where John gives us these series of titles to describe Jesus. And it's great because it's kind of like, if you guys have ever seen this, I remember first time I saw a picture of Mosaic.

You guys know what I'm talking about? It's a whole bunch of different pictures. They all have their own images on them yet together they form a bigger picture. I remember being blown away the first time I saw that. And it's kind of like that.

John's painting an image here with all these titles and descriptions and epithets of Jesus, who he is, in order to form a fuller picture of who he is, what his identity is.

[19:41] And so you see the Lamb of God, verse 29, 36, Son of God, 34 to 49, Messiah, King of Israel, Son of Man. I'm not going to cover all of these in detail because John unpacks them later in his Gospel and I want to, but I will just cover them briefly as we go by.

First, verse 41, we learn that Jesus is the Messiah. When Andrew finds his brother Simon Peter, he tells him, we have found the Messiah. And Apostle John adds the explanatory note there that which means Christ.

So that's what Christ means. It's not Jesus' last name. Rather, it's a description. It's an epithet that describes the fact that he's the Messiah. And it means literally anointed one.

And in the Old Testament, anointing was the process by which you consecrated someone for God's service. You set them apart. And in the Old Testament, it was only the kings and priests and prophets that were, I mean, not were they, they were anointed with oil.

The kings, prophets, and priests. The normal people, the people of God, they were not anointed. So when it says that Jesus is the Christ, then he's the, he's the anointed one par excellence, right?

[20:47] He is the ultimate prophet, priest, and king. And the designation king of Israel also speaks to that, his kingliness, right? So that's what the Messiah refers to. Jesus is the fulfillment of all of that.

He's the consecrated, anointed one. But not only is he the Messiah that Israel's been waiting for, he says that he's the Lamb of God, in verse 9, who takes away the sin of the world.

Not just for the people of Israel, not just for the ethnic Jews, but he's the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And that has, in the background, of course, passages that talk about the sacrificial lamb, like Isaiah 53 or Leviticus 1 to 5.

But chiefly, and most importantly, the lamb refers to the Passover lamb, right? In Exodus 12, where Israel's in captivity and slavery in Egypt, and God's promise to deliver them and the way he does that is through the Passover, which is the last plague that comes, where he instructs the Jews, his people, to kill a lamb without blemish and then to rub its blood on the lintel and the doorposts.

And when they do that, the destroyer that God sends will pass over, right, those doors that were painted by the blood of the lamb, painted with the blood of the lamb. But the destroyer went through, passed over all the doors of the Israelite people, but destroyed the firstborn of all the Egyptians.

[22 : 06] And that's how they were delivered from the grip of Pharaoh. And that points, of course, to Jesus as the lamb of God. He's the unblemished lamb, the blameless one, the holy one, the one who is without sin, who now dies for the sinfulness of people.

All those Israelites deserve the judgment of that destroyer, yet they were spared because of the blood of the lamb. In the same way, all people deserve the judgment of God because of our sin, yet we are spared, we are forgiven through the blood of the lamb.

So he's the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But it gets even more cosmic, bigger than that. Verse 34, John the Baptist testifies, I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God.

I want to explain this a little bit because sometimes the expression Son of God can be confusing because it's used differently throughout the Bible. And sometimes it means not much more than this person is like God.

So for example, if you look at Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that peacemakers are sons of God. That's not saying that they're divine. It's not saying that they're even believers, followers of Christ.

[23 : 17] It's just saying that they're like God in a sense that they're imitating him. And that's a typical Hebrew idiom because Hebrew, the language doesn't have a lot of adjectives. So when they're trying to say that something, describe something, they say son of something.

So example, Psalm 89, 22. In order to describe the wicked, it calls them a son of wickedness.

Proverbs 31, 5. The afflicted are called the sons of affliction.

Deuteronomy 3, 18. It calls courageous men sons of valor. So sons of God could simply mean they're like God in that, peacemakers like God. But because it could be used in such varied ways, we have to look at the context.

And in the context of John, son of God is extremely significant. It's a very, very loaded term because it's a special designation for Messiah referring to his kingship.

He's going to be the king in the line of David that comes to redeem Israel as it was promised in 2 Samuel 7, 13-14 where God says that he will establish the kingdom for a son in the line of David and he says, I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son.

[24 : 25] And we talked last week how John describes, John Apostle describes Jesus that he is the only son from the father. The only son. And he says at the end of the prologue that he's the only God who is at the father's side who makes the father known.

In other words, when he says that Jesus is the son of God, he's saying he's the son of God in the sense that no one else is. He's a unique son of God. He is the only son of God.

The only begotten son as we used to say. And John concludes this that Jesus is the son of God after seeing the spirit descend from heaven like a dove and remain on Jesus.

And the reason for that is that's a very distinct proof of that because in the Old Testament as well, the spirit of God comes temporarily to empower his special envoys for a specific task and then he departs.

That's the pattern in the Old Testament. But here on Jesus, the spirit of God comes and he remains on him. That's significant. So Jesus, now being that only son, the unique son of God, he will always be full of the spirit of God.

[25 : 36] He is the second person of the Trinity. He is God himself. So that's Jesus' identity. Not only is he the Messiah of Israel, he's the lamb that takes away the sin of the whole world, and his mission is for the whole world and not just that he's the son of God.

He is God himself, the second person of the Trinity. And because that's Jesus' identity, he's able to make a unique promise. What's Jesus' promise?

And in verses 43 to 51, Jesus interacts with Nathaniel, who's probably Bartholomew, who, in the other lists, in the other Gospels. And Jesus amazes him by commenting on the fact that Nathaniel is an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit.

This doesn't seem like much to us when you hear that. I mean, you could say that about anybody, but apparently there was something about that that really resonated with Nathaniel. And that character assessment was correct because then he asks in surprise, how do you know me?

Because that's who he was. He was an Israelite with no needy. So how do you know me? It's like, how did you know that? And Jesus further displays his supernatural knowledge by telling him, well, before Philip called you, well, before we met, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.

[26 : 55] I saw you when you were sitting under that fig tree. Which is particularly meaningful because fig tree in the Old Testament can refer to Israel, can signify Israel. So he's sitting under the fig tree and Jesus somehow saw him even though he wasn't there.

And so that convinces him and he says, you are the king of Israel. You are the son of God, king of Israel. And Nathaniel is immediately convinced. But then Jesus tells him, you know what?

What I just told you is nothing compared to what I'm going to show you. Truly, truly, I say to you, verse 51, follow along with me. You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man.

This is a reference to Jacob's dream in Genesis 28. Right? And it says that when Jacob dreamed, behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven and behold, the angels of God were ascending, angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

And behold, the Lord, the Lord himself stood above it and said, I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, your father and the God of Isaac. Jacob was so struck by the vision.

[28 : 00] He said that this is the very house of God, the gate of heaven. So he named the place Bethel, which means house of God. Now, then Jesus is saying something incredibly remarkable because he's saying that that house of God, that gate of heaven, that amazing vision that Jacob the patriarch had, that is me.

You will see the angels ascending and descending on the son of man, who is Jesus. Jesus is the new Bethel. He is the son of God who gives us access to God.

And Jesus is uniquely able to do this, not only because he's the Messiah and the Lamb of God and the son of God, but also because he's the son of man, as he describes himself here. He was the word that made flesh, the son of God who dwelled among us and atoned for our sins so we can now be forgiven of our sins and reconciled to God.

And it's easy to think of son of man simply as another roundabout way of saying that I'm a man, right? And it does mean that he's a man, son of man, right? But it's not just a man.

He's not just saying that I'm just a man. He doesn't say I'm a son of man. He says I am the son of man, right? And who is the son of man? It's the vision in Daniel 7 where in Daniel the prophet sees a vision.

[29 : 22] He said, my vision at night I looked and there before me I saw in the clouds a son of man, a man like a son of man coming down with the clouds of heaven. He approached the ancient of days, that's God, and was led into his presence and the ancient of days gave him authority, glory, and sovereign power.

He says he gave this son of man a sovereign power and that all people, the peoples of every language and tongue worshipped him. you're not supposed to worship anything other than God, especially in strictly monotheistic Judaism, yet they worship this son of man and God gave him authority, glory, sovereign power and his kingdom will never be destroyed.

That son of man, the ideal son of man, the perfect son of man, the ultimate son of man that will represent all of humanity, that son of man, that's me, says Jesus.

That's what he's talking about. And because he is the son of God and he's the son of man, he's uniquely able to give us access to God, which is why he baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

It's similar with the concept of anointing, which was restricted in the Old Testament. Spirit of God was not in all people in the Old Testament. He came at particular moments to empower people for things.

[30 : 42] But in the New Testament, as Prophet Joel prophesied, the Spirit will be poured out on all flesh. Now because of Christ, because of him, he who is the son of God and son of man, now all of his followers will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

We will have the very Spirit of God dwelling in us, empowering us. That's the promise. It's a pretty amazing promise, isn't it? And after telling us about Jesus' identity and telling us about his promise, John issues a very simple invitation.

And his invitation is to simply come and see the son of God who gives us access to God. Come and see and follow him. So the phrase come and see, those verbs and the word follow are both, it's a motif throughout this passage.

It occurs again and again and again if you look with me. Verse 39, Jesus invites the two disciples of John the Baptist who are following him to come and you will see. He says that. Now in verse 46, Philip says to his skeptical friend Nathaniel, come and see.

And then similarly, the verb follow is used several times and in fact, in the Gospel of John, the word follow really is used almost in a technical sense to follow as the disciple. So it implies a commitment.

[32 : 00] It implies an entrusting of oneself to this teacher, to this Lord. And it says in verse 37, to the disciples of John, follow Jesus and Jesus saw them following. Verse 30, Andrew follows Jesus.

In verse 40, Jesus tells Philip in verse 43, follow me. Right? That's the point of this passage. Come and see the Son of God who gives us access to God. Come and follow this Son of God who gives us access to God.

perhaps if you're in this morning and you have not yet made a decision to follow Christ. And if you have not decided to become his disciple. If that's the case, we want to thank you for being here but we want to issue this invitation that John has for you simply to come and see.

Stay with us for a little while. Keep coming to our corporate worship services. Get involved in the life of the church as we do life together. Get to know us and through us and through God's word come and see the Son of God.

Get to know Jesus. He's the only one that can give us access to God the Father. Maybe you're skeptical. Maybe you're like Nathaniel. Because when Philip first told Nathaniel that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, Nathaniel said to him, can anything good come out of Nazareth?

[33 : 19] Nazareth was a measly town of about a thousand people. So the college town, I went to Williams College in Western Mass. It was in Williamstown which the college was the only thing there.

We had a downtown that was literally one street and even that town had 2,000 people or a little more. I mean 2,000 people in school. But this Nazareth is even smaller than that.

In fact, it was so bad that Galileans who are mocked by the Judeans, people who lived in Judea, mocked people who lived in Galilee. The Galileans, on the other hand, mocked the people who lived in Nazareth.

So now, you understand Nathaniel because the king the Messiah, the Son of God from Nazareth.

He's skeptical, right? But even though he was skeptical, he came without a duplicitous motive.

He came without deceit, it says in verse 47. Even though he was blunt in his criticism, even though he was skeptical, he came with the genuine desire to see, come and see if this was true, if this was really the Son of God.

[34 : 23] And that's all we ask of you. One commentator, F.F. Bruce, says this about this conversion of Nathaniel. He says, Honest inquiry is a sovereign cure for prejudice.

Nazareth might be all that Nathaniel thought, but there is an exception to prove every rule, and what an exception these young men had found. You might think that Christians are ill-informed or that Christianity itself is outdated and regressive.

You might be skeptical. That's okay. We invite you. But come without deceit. Come like Nathaniel did to see for yourself if this really is true, if Jesus really is who he claimed to be, that he is the Son of God who gives us access to God.

And if you do, I believe that you will be like the thousands, the millions, the people who have gone before you since Nathaniel and before our time who have come to confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

As C.S. Lewis, the famous Oxford professor and atheist turned Christian said, I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Son has risen not only because I see it but because by it I see everything else.

[35 : 30] When you come and see the Son of glory, the Son of God, you will not only see him but you will see that through him everything else in and around you makes sense because he is the God.

He is the creator. Maybe you were born into a Christian household. Maybe you were even baptized as an infant or you grew up going to church but I want to ask you did you really have a relationship with God?

Have you come to see this God? Do you know him? Not just know Jesus but do you love this Jesus because that's what he demands. We noted earlier that John the Baptist deviated from the practice of the normal practice of the Jews of baptizing only the Gentile converts.

He baptized Jews and he did that to make a distinct theological statement that no, no one is except doesn't matter if you could trace your lineage back to Abraham himself. Doesn't matter.

Doesn't matter that you're a Jew and you grew up observing the law that your parents were Jews that your grandparents were Jews. You have to repent yourself. You have to confess your own sins and believe in this Jesus the Son of God.

[36 : 38] That's what John the Baptist was trying to say and that applies to us as well. Doesn't matter that you could trace your lineage to, I don't know, seventh generation, maybe Puritans, Jonathan Edwards even. It doesn't matter how long you've been going to church.

It doesn't matter whether you were born in a Christian household or even baptized as an infant because that was a faith that you did not own. You had not repented and believed. So you must repent and believe yourself and if that's you then I invite you to do that.

I invite you to consider baptism. That's coming up in a few weeks, October 16th. To make a public profession of your inward faith saying that I have repented and believed and I own this faith for myself.

And if you are a true believer, you have repented and you have believed and been baptized and I pray to God that we will never become so familiar with this Jesus that we take him for a grant. You can't. Continue to behold him. Continue to come and follow him. Continue to see him because his riches, his beauty, they're inexhaustible and you will get to know him deeper and you will come to love him more and more as you do so.

[37 : 53] And I also want to ask you to consider the implications of this if you are a believer because if you are a believer, you became a believer because someone in this great chain, this movement of word of mouth evangelism, someone in that great chain of sharing about Christ told you, invited you to come and see.

Someone told you to come and see Jesus, the Son of God. And that's been the foundational principle of Christian expansion from the very beginning. New followers of Jesus bear witness to Jesus to other people.

Those people then in turn become followers of Jesus and then repeat the process. That's how church growth has happened throughout the centuries. Yes, there are formal means of evangelism, like the service or like Bible study for evangelism, like evangelistic Bible studies for unbelievers.

There are ways we can do that as well. But by and large, the way the church grew was through informal missionaries, all of us ministering, telling people, come and see.

There's a really humorous account, at least from my perspective, of a, I guess he was probably an atheist. He was a pagan writer. I guess he's not an atheist.

[39 : 03] He's a pagan writer from the time, early Christianity. His name was Kelsis. And he writes this scathing work, satirical work, mocking Christians.

He sounds a lot like some of the more vociferous atheists that we see in our day. And he writes this. He says, we see in private houses the most illiterate and bucolic yokels who will not dare to say anything at all in front of their elders and more intelligent masters.

But they get hold of any who are as ignorant as themselves and say, we know how men ought to live. If your children do as we say, you will be happy yourselves and make your home happy too. He's mocking Christians.

But brothers and sisters, that's nothing to be ashamed of. Nothing to be ashamed of. They're following the example of the first disciples of Jesus who simply said, come and see.

He said, this is how we were taught to live. And you will see. You will experience God for yourself. And you will come to see that He is the truth. You will come to see that He is the Son of God.

[40 : 04] And you will come to see that He is the only way to have access to God. So out of their excitement of having found this greatest treasure, person most worthy of being excited about and being shared about, they just simply went and told people, come and see.

That's what the early Christians did. So then, I want to invite all of you to do the same. Tell your family. Tell your friends.

Tell your neighbors to come and see the Son of God who gives us access to God. And notice that in the invitation that you see here, there's no sense of desperation. They are not, Jesus and Philip are not engaging in this intense argument trying to convince these people to prove to them that Jesus is the Messiah.

There's a place for that. Paul engages in some of that in Acts. But for this, generally speaking, there's no elaborate marketing strategy or advertisements here. Jesus twice says confidently in verse 50 and 51, you will see greater things than these.

You will see heaven opened. You will see. So come and see. Have confidence that God will reveal Himself to the people that you invite.

[41 : 18] People that you tell Him to come and see. Our job is not to make people convert. We can't do that. That's God's work to do. Our job simply is to say, come and see. And when we do, especially as we enter into this public phase of our ministry as a church, people will come and see the Son of God and get access to Him the only way they can through Jesus Christ.

So let's pray for that together. God, we are so grateful that someone, your servant, your son and daughter, invited us to come and see.

Whether it was our parents or our Sunday school teachers, Lord, we're so grateful to know you for who you are. And now we ask, Lord, that you would help us to be so captivated by you and so beholden to your glory, the glory of your son, that we would be, that we wouldn't be able to help ourselves, that we wouldn't be able to help it but tell everyone about how great you are and how good you are and tell them to come and see for themselves.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.