

**Livin' the Life**  
**The Father's Relentless Witness to Jesus, part 19**  
**John 5:31-47**  
March 11, 2018

Big Idea – Idolatry in the heart, specifically the love of the praise of other people, is the root cause of unbelief of the in the face of great witnesses to Jesus as the Son of God. The approval of others was of great worth than the approval of God.

We continue our series in the Gospel of John, Livin' the Life, today with "The Father's Relentless Witness to Jesus" picking up in John 5:31-47 where Matt left off. I have said my desire for this series is that we see Jesus as better, more satisfying, than our addiction to sin. Livin' the Life, the life found in Jesus is better than all the other alternatives! So let's read John 5:31-47, where we see The Father's Relentless Witness to Jesus clashing with the unbelief of the Jews. I want to outline the passage for us before we read it. In chapter five, the religious leaders are taking issue with Jesus' words and works, especially his claim of equality with God. Now he gives four witnesses who support his claim. The first is John the Baptist (33-35); then the works of Jesus (36); third is God the Father (37-38); and finally Scripture (39-47).

Let's start with the first witness, John the Baptist (33-35), who testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world and the Son of God (1:29-30, 34-35). Jesus did not need John's testimony, but since John had credibility with them for a while (1:19-24), he hoped that this would lead to their salvation. Notice that they were willing to rejoice in his light for a while. They wanted to hear what he had to say only for a time showing us that their response was superficial. Following Jesus is coming to him for salvation, a faith which does not fade away but grows over time.

Then Jesus describes his second witness as greater than John's witness, the works the Father has given Jesus to do (36), referring to the signs or miracles Jesus performed (20:30-31). Remember in John three, Nicodemus said he knew Jesus was from God because of the signs he did (3:2) yet he did not see his glory as the Son of God.<sup>1</sup> No witness, even miracles, guarantees someone will believe. Witnesses are sign posts or clues that point us to God. The writer of this gospel, John, saw the witnesses, and his own witness is that we have seen his glory, glory of the only Son of the Father full of grace and truth (1:14). The third witness is the Father himself (37), probably a reference to Jesus' baptism when the Father said, "this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased (Mat 3:16-17)." At this point Jesus begins pushing back on their unbelief. He says that they have never heard God's voice, never seen God's form, and even now do not have God's word abiding in them because they do not believe in Jesus (37-38). In other words, those who claim to know God the best have never really known God at all. The Old Testament pointed to Jesus and rejecting Jesus is rejecting the God who speaks and reveals himself in Jesus. How can Jesus know this about them? Because he is God in the flesh. Jesus is more than a good teacher, more than a religious leader, more than a moral example for us. Jesus is God in the flesh who came to save us because we desperately need saving from our sin. We can look at our world and see that there is something fundamentally wrong with it. And we can reflect on our own lives and recognize that we do not live up to our own standards. The fundamental problem with our world and our own lives is sin.

Then Jesus moves to the fourth and final witness, the Scriptures. He says, you search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life and it is they that bear witness to me yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life (39-40). He is saying that though they are very religious, follow the law meticulously, know Scripture inside and out, they do not know God! The reputation of the Jews at this time is legendary for their study and knowledge of the Old Testament. This is not an argument against studying Scripture. Most of us probably neglect the study of Scripture and are spiritually worse off for it. A literal translation of this phrase is, "you do not want to come to me." This is not a Jewish problem, this is a human problem. In our natural fallen and sinful condition, nobody wants Jesus. All of us are looking for the same thing. Trying to make sense of this

---

<sup>1</sup> As the disciples did, see 2:11.

life and what happens when we die. We all are looking for happiness, meaning, and purpose. But we want it on our terms, in our way even when it contradicts reality. Then when life does not meet our expectations, we seek to numb our disappointment.

Why did those who should have known God the most reject Jesus? He tells us in 41-47. First, Jesus says I do not receive glory from people and I know that you do not have the love of God in you (42). That is, I will not change my message to gain your approval and acceptance; you are rejecting me because you do not love God (42). He says almost the same thing later, you don't believe in Moses so you don't believe in me (46-47). Then Jesus says, I have come in my Father's name and you do not receive me (43). Yet if another comes in his own name you will receive him (44)! In other words, if someone comes to you with a message you like, who will give you what you want to hear (35; 40), you will embrace him. I am sometimes amazed at what people will believe. I hear Christians say things they believe that have nothing to do with the bible and even contradict the bible. People who reject Christianity still have faith but just in a different set of beliefs which draw different lines between orthodoxy and heresy. And often those who reject Christianity do so without ever having investigated it. Most of us here probably have faith in Christ and are genuinely following him. But there are areas of your life where you do not want to trust Jesus. You are hiding those areas, protecting them, even nurturing them. Those wants are so strong that they control you. Maybe it is seeking the glory or praise of other people (44). This was the core issue for the Jews, they loved the praise and approval of others for being religious, for being moral, for being upstanding in the community rather than God's approval.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. What is a witness?
2. Who or what are the four witness that testify to Jesus in this passage?
3. Describe the characteristics of each witness?
4. Why is John described as a burning and shining lamp?
5. Why were the Jew only interested in listening to John for a while?
6. What are the works God gave for Jesus to do and why are they so important?
7. How can someone study and know the bible so well yet never have heard nor seen God and not have his word abiding in them?
8. How should we take that as a warning?
9. What does Jesus mean by receiving glory from others and not seeking the glory from God?
10. How do you personally love receiving glory from others?

