Believe, Live and Share the Gospel (John 20)

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Preacher: Matt Nicholas

[0:00] Yeah, so let's turn our Bibles to John chapter 20. That's not Acts, it's John. Okay, John chapter 20, verse 19 to 31. Let's read that. And I'm reading from the NLT version.

That Sunday evening, the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly Jesus was standing there among them. Peace be with you, he said. As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his sides.
They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord. Again, he said, peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.
Then he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sin, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.
One of the 12 disciples, Thomas, was not with the others when Jesus came. They told him, we have seen the Lord. But he replied, I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them and place my hands onto the wounds in his side.
[1:12] Eight days later, the disciples were together again. And at this time, Thomas was with them. The doors were locked. But suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. Peace be with you, he said.

Then he said to Thomas, put your finger here and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer.
Believe. My Lord and my God, Thomas exclaimed. Then Jesus told him, you believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.
The disciples saw Jesus. So many, do many other miraculous signs in addition to the one recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.
And that by believing in him, you will have life by the power of his name. Cool. Pass over to Matt now. Thank you. Okay, good evening again, everybody.
[2:28] So tonight we're looking at this passage in John chapter 20 at the end of the gospel. And Christelle and I came upon this topic as we were heading down to South Canterbury to figure out what we would do as support mission workers there.

I wonder what you would say to a group of people or a church that you were going to support mission workers is, what is our purpose? What is our purpose as disciples on mission?
That's the key question that we're looking at tonight. What is our purpose as disciples on mission? Now, of course, the best place to go to find answers like this, to find the great answers of life, is to the Bible, isn't it?
God who stands before the whole world, who created us, who's the author of life. That's the person for us to go to, and to his instruction manual.
And how much more for us as disciples on mission to go back to God's brief. So we're in John chapter 20 tonight. And as we heard, the context is Jesus has just shown Thomas the nail holes in his hands as a sign of resurrection.
[3:58] Of a sign that this is true. This is real, guys. This is standing right in front of you. And so in verse 30 we read, Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
So Jesus did so many other things. If you go flick across to the next chapter of the book of John, we read that there were so many things that probably there weren't enough books in the world to write them all down.

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But these things, the things in the book of John, were chosen, recorded, and preserved for the very purpose that you might believe.
And by believing, have life. This is John's purpose in writing the Gospel of John. It's his purpose for us that we might believe in Jesus, that we might know who he is, as the Messiah and as God's Son.
[5:24] So when you look through the Gospel of John, I'd encourage you to look into the Gospel of John right the way through it. It's all for this purpose.

From chapter 1, where Jesus is introduced, to chapter 2, where Jesus does a miracle revealing who he is. What kind of miracle does Jesus do in John chapter 2?
Can anyone say that tonight? Yes. Jesus turns water into wine.
What a sign of life, a sign of celebration at a feast, a wedding feast. Jesus turns water into wine. And he shows us who he is. He shows us his divine nature.
Then we go through the building of his ministry, through the seven great I Am statements, where Jesus tells us about who he is. Then the great climax of his death and resurrection.
[6:24] And all these things, chosen and recorded to help us believe that Jesus is God's promised King and Son. There's a lot of things that we could look at throughout the book of John, because everything relates to this one topic.

But tonight I've just got a little bit of time, and I'll be just focusing on a couple things. First, I'd like to focus on that word believe. The word believe plays a really big role in these two verses up here.
It also plays a really big role throughout the whole book of John. Take a guess. How many times is the word believe used in the book of John? 20, 60, 20,000.
Okay, 104. 104 times this word believe is used in the gospel of John. You'll be pleased to know that we're not going through all those tonight.
I'll be just picking up on a couple things. What is it that John tells us those who believe in Christ have? What do we have?
[7:44] Life. What kind of life? John chapter 3. Eternal. Eternal life. Eternal life.

John chapter 7. Jesus says that those who believe will have springs of living water flowing from their inmost being.
In the gospel of John, if you're someone who believes in Jesus, you're someone who's identified with him, with this king and messiah, this lord of all the earth.
In contrast to the rest of the world that rejects him, everything hinges on this word believe. Are you believing in Christ tonight?
Are you believing in Jesus as God's one and only son and anointed king for all the earth? What does it mean to believe in Jesus?
[8:49] Well, John 1, chapter 1, verse 12, says that to those who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

So the word are received is used there as a synonym for the word believe. So to believe means to receive Jesus, to receive him as he is, as God's king and son into your life.
To receive him as our Lord and saviour, to believe in him, to trust in him, and to turn our lives over to him. We must believe if we are to have life.
Now all of us know that we need to live, right? When we get short on oxygen, we suddenly start getting desperate for air.
Kind of like me trying to swim. When we start running out of, get thirsty for water, we start getting desperate.
[10:00] Oh, mate, bro, give me some water. Give me some water. When we're in lockdown for COVID, all of a sudden we display this urgent need to go and get toilet paper, to stock up on toilet paper.

Why? Because everyone knows we need to live. We're wired for life. Yet sadly, not many people think very seriously about the biggest problem of life.
That's death. That's the biggest problem. As Norman Kirk, who was a previous prime minister in New Zealand, once said, people don't want much.
Just somewhere, someone to love, somewhere to work, something to hope for, and somewhere to live.
But if we just think about these things in our everyday lives, we miss the one thing that's most important that we need to live. And 100% of people are going to die.

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[11:12] That's a complete fact. We need a solution. We need to live. Now, many people think they are alive.

Many people think they're alive, but look up there at that flower. Is that flower alive? I cut that a little while ago.
After it was cut and I was holding it, is that flower alive? Can you tell me? 50-50 chance of getting it right or wrong?
Yes, no? It's alive. No. No, it's not. Technically, botanically, this flower is not alive.
It's dead. It's been cut off of the roots. So it can't grow. It can't thrive or survive. This flower is doomed to wilt and perish.
[12:17] And it doesn't matter how beautiful we are or how strong or young or athletic. Without Christ, we are all going to die. We've been cut off of the roots.

Right at the beginning, when humans sinned, when we turned away from God, we were cut off from the tree of life. And since then, as sin has come into the world, all of us are going to die.
And all of us are going to face God at judgment. This is the most pressing issue that we'll ever have to face. So forget worrying about exams.
Forget the greatest pressures at work. If you can have this sorted out, if you can have this secure, everything else is going to be okay.
You're going to be able to make it through. So the good news for us, the good news that Christians tell is that Jesus has come, that God has been speaking his message.
[13:27] If we read the Bible, this has been God's message right from the very beginning. Right from a Genesis, where there's nothing but darkness. The world lies in darkness.

And what happens? God speaks. And life comes into being. Light and life come into being.
Then we flick forward to John chapter 1. And again we see this imagery reflected again of the world laying in darkness.
But at this time, darkness represents our sin and separation from God. But what happens? God's word is sent to us.
Jesus comes into the world as the light and as the life of all mankind. And then we flick forward to John chapter 11 where Lazarus is laying dead in the tomb.
[14:34] And what does Jesus do? He calls out. He says, Lazarus, come out. And he comes to life.

He comes out. God's words bring life. And through Jesus, God has spoken into our darkness.
He's come and he's called us to life. That's God's call to you tonight through the gospel to come to life through Jesus.
As disciples on mission, that's our very first call. Before we help other people with their oxygen mask, we need to make sure that we have the oxygen mask on ourselves.
we first need to believe in Jesus. This is a thing that we do once and for the rest of our lives. Keep trusting and believing in Jesus.
[15:43] Okay, so believe the gospel. Believe the gospel. Next, I want to encourage us to live by the gospel.

I want us to encourage us to keep going in the gospel through God's grace and instruction.
Because the gospel isn't just sort of something where we park up to and then hop out of the car and try and walk the rest of the way ourselves.
The gospel is something that we keep trusting and believing in and growing in through the rest of our lives. the gospel of Christ. So when we wake up on a Monday morning, when we're old and grey, when we've sinned or haven't acted wisely, and when we have, we live by the gospel.
We live by the gospel. Now along the way, it's really easy for us to give up. I remember the morning after I came to Christ, I was sitting on the motorbike going along to milking with Dad.
The sun had just started to rise up and I remember the words that Dad said. He said, Matt, I'm really proud of what you just did last night.
[17:11] And as I heard those words wash over me, reminding me of the warmth of the previous night as I had chosen to follow Jesus, he said, the very same time, I very vividly remember also clinging onto the motorbike, shivering, thinking, what on earth have I just done?

What have I just done with my life? And whether it's that point or whether it's decades later, it's so easy to have doubts, it's so easy just to slide back into the world, just slide back into what's in front of us, to what's at the table, the food in front of us, what's in front of us in our work, in family or

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friends.
But friends, we've got to keep going. As Christians, we've survived a plane crash, but we're still out in the wilderness. We haven't yet made it to heaven's golden shores and we've got to keep going. We've got to keep trusting, we've got to keep believing and following Jesus until he finally takes us home. What's it going to take?
We need to make sure tonight that we're sure that we're committed to this thing, that we're going to give it our all so that Jesus can give his all to us, his eternal kingdom that will never perish or fade.
[18:51] If we give our lives to Jesus, he can truly do something beautiful amongst us. We must let him have his way.

go. Okay, just skipping forward a little bit here. Okay, I have a question. Is there anyone here who doesn't like mornings?
A few people here. You know when the alarm just doesn't seem to go off at the right time or you just can't seem to find the right shirt in the closet or maybe the car doesn't start, whatever it is.
You know sometimes I wake up and I feel like that with Jesus. I wake up and I'm like I don't know what to do. I don't know how to share about Jesus.
I don't know where to go or what to say. But the good thing for us tonight is that when we don't know what to do, where to go, what to say, we can turn to Jesus.
[19:57] Both in good days and bad days, we turn back to the gospel because in the gospel God has provided everything we need.

I've got a few images to illustrate this. First of all we have the mechanic. So Jesus Christ who forgives our sin and restores us to God.
Without this we can't move one step towards God. We've got the mechanic to reconnect us. to God.
Secondly, we've got the map. God's wisdom for salvation explained throughout the entire Bible as we read about 2 Timothy 3.15.
Thirdly, we've got the coffee to help us to wake up each morning. The power from God's spirit to witness. Acts 1 verse 8 tells us. The Holy Spirit also connects us to God personally and points us in the right direction wherever we're at on that map.
It always points us back to the right place to faith in Christ Jesus. Just like that little blue navigation dot wherever we're at.
[21:13] Okay, and then finally we have the gospel which is God's power for salvation. We've got the engine to keep us going.

We've got all the things we need through the gospel. God has graciously, wonderfully provided what we need to keep going. Will you keep going tonight?
God has provided us what we need to live the life God always meant us to live. a life lived in relationship with God, a life chasing and pursuing God's plans and dreams, a life growing and changing as we respond to God's word, a life learning how to follow all the things that Jesus has taught us in the pages of the Bible.
That's what it means to truly live more than life in the office, more than life out at the restaurant with friends, more than any kind of fun we could have in the sky.
This is what it means to truly live. Is this the life that you are living today? Are you chasing God's dreams and plans through all the ways that he's taught us in the Bible?
[22:44] people? I'm preaching to myself as much as anyone here tonight. God has a beautiful and perfect plan for us. We need to trust him.

Okay, so we've had two points. We're getting there. Can anyone tell me what the first point was? Believe the gospel. gospel. Secondly, live the gospel.
And thirdly, share the gospel. So we're flicking over to John 20 verse 21 now, where Jesus is giving his final instructions, passing things on to the disciples, where he says, as the Father has sent me, I am sending you.
That's Jesus' message to us again here tonight. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. I am sending you.
It's a pretty massive statement, isn't it? God's big plans that he forethought before the world began, culminating in Christ, in his life, death, resurrection, and being passed on to us.
[24:07] I think that's pretty crazy. But it's a beautiful thing, God passing on his plans through Christ to us.

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What a wonderful thing to have God's words spoken into our lives, worked through them and out our very lips, the very message that God will use to redeem and rescue and transform other people. What a privilege. Sharing the gospel is a beautiful step that completes this picture of faith and life that we have in Jesus.
I mean, what is life if you can't share it with other people? What is it to have joy? What is it to have a party without inviting other people along to it?
what is it to know mercy without sharing, extending that abundant outpouring of mercy that we've received from Jesus Christ to other people?
[25:16] To abide in the gospel, to stay in the gospel is to share it with other people, to extend it to them that they might hear and believe in the saving message of Jesus.

As Christians, we've survived the crash, but so many people out there still need to hear and believe. Now, let me be clear tonight that there are many people who will not listen.
There are many people who will not believe our message despite our best efforts. God is love.
It's just right for us to do everything we can to help other people. And as we do, God continues his story of sending Jesus, his son, to save us, to save whoever would believe in him.
God gave his all for us. How can we not do that for other people too? Share the gospel. It's a big task and a small task.
[26:41] All of us are needed. All of us have a role to play. I wonder what role that you're playing at the moment. I wonder what role maybe you could play.

who is it that you could share about Jesus with? Who is it maybe that you could just encourage to think again about him?
Or maybe about coming along to church? Or maybe there are some words of Jesus' that you could help someone believe just a little bit more clearly or effectively?
or maybe there are some gospel workers or missionaries that you could support throughout the world and of course through your church here.
As we conclude tonight, let me ask, have you heard Jesus' recall and responded to him? have you heard him calling out of our darkness, out of our tomb and into his life?
[27:47] Have you believed in Jesus and received him as God's king and son into your life? Today is not too late, but one day it could be.

have you heard Jesus' call and believed in him? Secondly, are you living by the gospel? Are you continuing to trust Jesus and learn to obey all that he has commanded us?
Is there an area where you have slipped a little bit to the left or to the right? Or should I say, which areas have we slipped a little to the left or a little to the right? And how is God trying to bring us back on track?
in faith through Christ Jesus today? And thirdly and finally, how are we sharing the gospel? How are we helping others to believe and have life here in Auckland, New Zealand and the world?
This is God's plan for us as disciples on mission, to believe the gospel, to live by the gospel. and to share the gospel.
[29:04] Thanks for allowing me to come tonight. I pray that God would bless his word to you.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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