

Behold the lamb of God

John 1:19-51

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TRANSCRIPT:

I suspect you've had this experience. You've been going about your day, and you've found perhaps a cafe that serves the best coffee you've ever had. Or maybe you're listening to music in the car, and you find a song, and you're like, "This is just the best song." Or this one happens to me all the time, where you're reading a book, and you go, "This book is fantastic."

And what do you do when that happens? Well, immediately, you go and you tell all your friends, or at least you tell one or two of them. And you say, "You've got to try this. Come and check it out. This is amazing." And we do that; it's natural. It happens to all of us.

And the reason I bring that up is that it's what we see happening here in John's Gospel. I picked this large amount of text because I find it fascinating after John's introduction in John 1:1-18, which is full of this exalted heavenly language about Jesus being the light of the world and coming in and not being overcome by darkness and shining in this world and revealing the Father.

We then get this extended treatment of people hearing about Jesus. But I don't know if you noticed in the text, Jesus does almost nothing. They're not seeing Jesus do something; they're hearing about Jesus. They're hearing about Him, and I want to show you that they're hearing all sorts of different things about Jesus. And then they're responding to that. They're responding to what they hear about Him.

And so I want to start by showing you that first part, that people in this text are seeing something; they're hearing about who Jesus is. And there's all sorts of words and descriptions of Jesus in this text. We're gonna go through the text together and pick some of those out.

The first one we see is that Jesus is called the Christ or the King. You see that in John 1:20 to begin with, where John the Baptist is approached by priests and Levites from Jerusalem. And they're clearly asking him, "Are

you the Christ?" Because his immediate response is, "I am not the Christ." He doesn't deny that he's not the Christ. That comes up again in John 1:25, where the Pharisees or the people sent by the Pharisees are asking, "Well, hang on, you're saying you're not the Christ."

But then we see a similar idea in John 1:41, where Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, goes to Simon Peter and says, "We have found the Messiah," which is translated the Christ. And you see it once more in John 1:49, when Nathanael says to Jesus, "You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

And that linking of the Son of God with the King of Israel means that we see the same idea back in John 1:34, when John the Baptist declares that Jesus is the Son of God. And so you've got these three words that are all connected: the Christ or the Messiah, Messiah is just the Hebrew, the Christ is the Greek. You've got the King of Israel, and you've got the Son of God. This idea comes up quite a bit, doesn't it?

And what this title is presenting to us is something that the Israelites were waiting for, for a long, long time. In fact, they were waiting for it well before they ever saw a king. You go back to Genesis 49, you see that Jacob, when he's blessing his children, Israel when he's blessing his children, he says to Judah, "The scepter shall not depart from your loins," basically, "your children will be kings." "You'll have kings coming from you." Now, there's no king in Israel at this point, but there's this idea being seeded that a king's going to come.

You see it again in 1 Samuel at the start, when Hannah, who's going to give birth to Samuel, who anoints the first king, when Hannah's praying before she's given birth to Samuel, she praises God that God is going to send a king. And then, of course, Samuel comes, and he anoints Saul and David, and after David, we have Solomon, and you get this succession of David and Solomon, who are the greatest kings of Israel.

And the glory that you see in Solomon's kingdom is something that far surpasses any glory you could really imagine of any earthly kingdom you know of today. A kingdom that is secure, full of peace and prosperity, where silver is as common as stones in Jerusalem, where the enemies of God's people are kept at bay, where there's wisdom and righteousness in the exercise of his rule, where Solomon's making wise judgments about how to lead his people and how people should live.

And that history of having a great king being promised, and Solomon being this kingdom that has perfection really, in how it's displayed, like it's this strong, powerful kingdom, never leaves the Israelite mind. Because

God promised David that he would have a king like Solomon on the throne forever. So even though after Solomon the kingdom falls to pieces, the Israelite people are still waiting, waiting, waiting for a king.

And not just a king of Israel, because the promises that God made about this king were quite global in their scope. Psalm 2 picks up on the connection between this idea of king and the idea of him being the Son of God. When David writes, speaking of his child who would be the great king that was promised, he says, "I will tell of the decree: the Lord said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.'" You hear that, "Ask of me; you're my Son; the Son of God is coming, and you are going to be a king who has the nations for his inheritance."

And so when we see in John's Gospel this idea of the Son of God coming, the Christ, the Messiah, the King of Israel coming, in the Israelite mind, they are hearing that Jesus is this promised king. Jesus is the one who has come to rule in perfect strength and power, in perfect righteousness and wisdom, to bring prosperity to the world so that it would be a place where people live and dwell in security and safety.

That's what these early disciples are hearing as John proclaims, "This is the Christ; this is the Son of God," as Nathanael realizes, "This is the King of Israel who's standing before him." Now at this point, Jesus has done nothing. All people are hearing is, "This is the Christ; this is the king."

And really, this is something that Israelites are not the only ones who are waiting for this, who know that they need a king to come. We also know deep in our hearts that we need a righteous, perfect king to rule. It's why we place our hope in great politicians. It's why when there's a great political party and politicians, it's why when the wars start around the world, we look out and we go, "I hope that Donald Trump will step in and stop the war between Iraq and Israel." And everyone applauds when he manages to do something. It's because we have deep inside of us this idea that we need a man who can rule and reign and bring stability and peace to the world.

But throughout history, even though we've seen many men rise up and people follow them and hope that they will bring about a rule of wisdom and strength, every single one of the kingdoms of this age has fallen. Every single leader who's risen up and sought to bring about a place of peace and prosperity has been evil or has died and failed at the end.

And so deep inside of us, we know too that when we hear about a great king who would come and bring peace and prosperity and security and

safety and wisdom and righteousness to the entire world, we know that that's something we need, and it's something we want.

And the message of John's Gospel here today is that Jesus is that king. And we don't live on the side of history where Jesus hasn't done anything yet. We live after Jesus has lived and died and risen again and ascended into glory. And we know that Jesus is the man who is right now ascended to the right hand of God the Father, who's been given power and authority over all nations and kingdoms. And He is ruling right now, bringing about a kingdom on this earth that will be full of all of that strength and peace and prosperity and security and safety. And at the end of all time when He comes again, He will bring that kingdom into culmination. And all of His people who have submitted to His reign will enter into a new heavens and a new earth where there is no more sorrow, there's no more crying, there's no more famine, there's no more tears.

There's no more mess in relationships because Jesus the King will be rightly ruling, exercising His rule. And all those who are on the earth will be submitting to His kingship in perfection.

And so it makes perfect sense—well, we'll get there—but it makes perfect sense that people respond the way they do to Him. But that's not all that Jesus is called in this text. He's not just the Son of God, the Christ, the King of Israel. He's also presented as a teacher or a great prophet. Look at John 1:21. Once again, the disciples of the Pharisees are questioning John the Baptist, and they're asking him, "Are you the prophet?"

And this links up with John 1:38 and 45. Let's go to 45 first. In John 1:45, Philip again finds Nathanael and says, "We found Him of whom Moses in the law wrote." And the question is, well, what is he talking about? Who is this one of whom Moses in the law wrote? And the answer is that Moses wrote about a prophet who would come after him in Deuteronomy 18. This is Deuteronomy 18:15-19, where Moses says, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers. It is to him you shall listen, just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' And the Lord said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers, and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.'"

You see what Moses is saying is that when Israel came out of Egypt to Mount Sinai, they saw something amazing. They saw a mountain lit up

with fire and lightning and cloud and darkness, and the voice of God spoke directly to them. Would you like that? Wouldn't that be amazing to hear the voice of God speak directly to you? Well, the response of the Israelites when they heard that voice of God, they said, "This is too much for us. We can't handle this. This is fearful; we're going to die if God keeps speaking to us. Moses, we want you to go up the mountain, hear from God, come down to us, and tell us what God says."

And so God says, "You know what? That's a good idea." They have spoken rightly, is what He says. "And I'm not only am I going to speak to you, Moses, and have you lead as a prophet who leads in my place, who speaks to me and then delivers my words to the people, I'm going to raise up a prophet like you from among the people who will speak my words and who will reveal me to my people."

And so when the disciples of the Pharisees are saying, "Are you the prophet?" And when Nathanael or Philip is saying to Nathanael, "We've found him of whom Moses in the law spoke," they're referring to this prophet, the one who would be like Moses, who would go ascend up the mountain of God and hear from God directly and come down and speak to his people about all that God says.

And the reality is that this is precisely what we need. This is why they were waiting for it because they understood deeply their need to both know God, to know what God says, to have God reveal Himself to them, to know what God says about our world and about us, and about how we can live with Him. But they also understood that they could not hear from God directly lest they die. He's too holy. He's too far above us. He's too holy in that if we were to be in God's presence, we would be struck down because of our sin and our wickedness. And He's too far above us in that we are mere creatures. How can a mere creature understand a transcendent Creator? Every time we try to wrap our heads around Him, we just can't do it.

So we need someone to bring God down to our level, in a sense, and to bring us up to God's level. We need someone to bridge the gap. And that is who Jesus is. He is the very Son of God, the incarnate God. He is God Himself who comes down to teach His people. Do you want to hear from God? Look at the person of Jesus Christ. Read the Gospels, read His Word, and see in Him God made flesh. Every beautiful, delightful characteristic of God on perfect display in a human being.

This is a major theme of John's Gospel. If you read through the whole Gospel, Jesus continually says, "I speak to you only the words I have heard from my Father." Look at His teaching. These are the words of God brought down to our level. And it's amazing how He does it. If you read through

again the Gospels, you'll hear Jesus speak in such plain language of such high and mighty truths. Parables about sheep and about flowers and about birds, about rich men and poor men. Very, very simple language. Jesus is that great teacher, that one who communicates God to us, who tells us all that we need to know about life and about godliness, about how we can be made right with God, reveals the transcending God to us.

And the reality is that everyone knows we need this. Do you know that one of our modern phenomena is the proliferation of gurus? Right? Jordan Peterson, every other podcaster you can think of. Why are we attracted to them? Why do we listen to them in their millions? Because we know we need someone to explain this world to us. We need someone to reveal to us the deeper truths of life. We need someone to help us work out how to live. Well, Jesus is the perfect one to do that. Jesus built life. Jesus designed life from the ground up. Jesus speaks life into being. He knows how it works. He is the perfect teacher.

But in this passage, we see that He's not just a king and not just the prophet and the teacher from God. He's also a great deliverer. We see this in John 1:23, where John the Baptist says, "I'll tell you who I am. I'm the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'" And the reason this teaches us that Jesus is a great deliverer is because he's referring to Isaiah 40.

And in Isaiah 40, we hear firstly in chapter 39 of how Israel is going to be taken away from the land of Israel into Babylon as exiles and slaves. And then in chapter 40, God speaks about how He's going to send a savior, a deliverer to bring them back out of exile. But listen to how He promises that. Isaiah 40:1-5 says, "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'"

Now this is an astonishing promise because it's not unusual for Israel to expect God to send a deliverer. They were used to this kind of thing happening. I mean, from the Exodus, where God sends Moses to deliver them out of Egypt, all through the judges, where they continually are assaulted by their enemies, and God sends judges to deliver them, all through the kings, where God sends different kings to deliver them. It's not unusual for them to expect God to send a deliverer. But here, did you hear what He

said? "Prepare a highway not for a man, prepare a highway for your God, because the glory of God is coming down. God Himself is going to come and deliver you." That's what He's saying in Isaiah 40, and you can read the whole rest of Isaiah 40. It's this tremendous display of God's power that He's going to bring in personally to deliver His people from the exile.

And so when John the Baptist says, "I am the one preparing this way," all of a sudden, you realize Isaiah 40 is not just talking about deliverance from exile because Israel's already come back from exile at this point when John the Baptist comes on the scene. So what Isaiah 40 is talking about is a greater deliverance, a greater exile. What would that be? Well, it's the fact that we are all in exile. We are all away from the presence of God because of our sin. We are all tied up in slavery, like the Israelites were in Egypt.

And you know this deep in your hearts; you know that sin entangles and brings you under captivity and makes you a slave. Try this, for instance, try just telling one lie. You can't do it. As soon as you tell one lie, you have to start inventing all these other lies to protect yourself from the first lie. Every sin we commit ties us up into a tangled web of sin. Or try not sinning, right? If you just slow down this week and try to just pick one of the Ten Commandments and say, "I'm not going to do that thing." What you will find is that inside your heart, all of a sudden, there are all these desires to do that thing, and it's almost—it is impossible—it's impossible to get away from it, to get out of it because we're in captivity; we're tied down. We're slaves to our lusts and our sins.

And so we need a great deliverer; we need a great savior, and that is precisely what Jesus came to do. He is God Himself come down to deliver His people from the exile and captivity of sin. Our culture knows this. These days addictions are running rampant throughout our society. Drugs, pornography, alcohol, gambling, medications, and they're just the ones that we know are bad. Social media, food, gym junkies, movies, all of these things become addictions in our lives in various ways. They bring us under captivity. Do you want to be free from these things? Do you want someone to liberate you from the mess of your life? Well, here John the Baptist is saying that one to deliver has come, that deliverer is God Himself come down in the flesh in Jesus Christ.

And the next thing we see is that this deliverance was no easy task because we're captive to sin, and sin's consequences are something that the Israelites knew full well. The Israelites were trained by God to know that sin deserves death and blood and fire. And so when John the Baptist then in John 1:29 sees Jesus coming toward him and says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," and when he repeats himself in John 1:36, looking at Jesus, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God," the Is-

raelites who were standing around him knew precisely what he was talking about. They knew what lambs were for. They knew that lambs were there to be killed as a blood sacrifice. They were there to be burned as a burnt sacrifice to take away their sin. And no Israelite who was sacrificing lambs day in and day out and year in and year out looked at that lamb and said, "You know what? That lamb is actually bearing my sin." No one would be crazy enough to think that that was the case. But what they did look at it and think was, "I deserve what that lamb is getting." That's why they'd put their hand on it. They would identify with the lamb and they'd say, "I deserve what this lamb is getting: blood, death, and fire."

But as they were trained time and time again with these sacrifices, they were being taught to look to God for a payment for their sin. And then God in Isaiah 53 made this very clear when He starts speaking about a servant whom He would send. And listen to these words: a servant who would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. A servant who would have the chastisement that brought us peace upon himself. One who would be wounded that we might be healed. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth."

Israelites knew this text. And so when John the Baptist says, "Behold the Lamb of God," they'd be making this connection. This is the one who's going to take blood and fire and death on our behalf. This is the one who would bear our iniquities. This is the one who God would send to be like a sheep before his shearers, silent as he suffered and died for my sake.

And the amazing thing is that this Lamb of God who would die is that great prophet, is that great king, is God Himself come to deliver His people. If you've been to church before, you would have heard this many, many times. And I think that sometimes when we hear things repeatedly, it loses its force. But do you just stop and think about the fact that God Himself became a lamb, was slaughtered on the cross, had His blood poured out, suffered the fiery wrath of God Himself for you, if you would but trust in Him?

And the language that John the Baptist uses, that Jesus takes to Himself, "the Lamb of God," should strike a note in our minds. Drive down the highway out here, the Hume Highway, and look at some sheep in a paddock and think to yourself, "Would I become a sheep to save that flock?" Like, is there any—some of you might be animal lovers—is there any animal that you would willingly become in order to save a herd of that animal? It's insane—Eric's shaking his head; I agree—it's insane, right? You would not

become an animal to save an animal. They're not worth it. I don't care how much you love animals; they're just not worth it. They are lesser creatures than you.

And yet God Himself, the difference between you and a lamb is nothing compared to the difference between you and God. God Himself chose to become a creature, to take on flesh, to suffer and die the consequences of your sin so that you might live. Is it any wonder that John the Baptist sees Him and says, "Behold, look at this. Look at the Lamb of God who has come, not like a sheep to take away one man's sin, but who has come to take away the sin of the world." Anyone who comes to Him can receive forgiveness. That's what it costs to deliver His people from the slavery of sin. This is the king come to die.

And this is all tremendous, isn't it? This is building in a ridiculous picture. It gets better. Look at John 1:32. John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'" And what does that mean? John the Baptist is there baptizing with water for the forgiveness of sins. And when you baptize someone with water, you dunk them in water, right? It cleans them. It's like having a bath. That's the picture. The picture is one of cleansing.

And that's precisely why we read out Ezekiel 36, that Steve read for us. So I won't read again, but you might have picked up some of the words that were there. God in Ezekiel 36 is promising to Israel once again that He's going to send a new thing, something that wouldn't just deal with the consequences of sin, something that wouldn't just create a kingdom where righteousness rules, something that's not just a communication of God and God's truth to people, but an inner cleansing. All those vile desires that make you feel guilt and shame, all the filthy marks that lie on your soul because of the history that you have of sin, washed away. Not just the inner marring of sin, but the desire for sin. The hatred, the covetousness, the bitterness, the lust that all bubbles up inside of you, washed away. Cleansed from all uncleanness, cleansed from your idols. "My Spirit put within you, a heart of stone removed," the coldness removed, the hatred of God removed. The unfeelingness in which we commit sin, and we abuse and hate others, and we just don't care about it, we're quite happy living in that way, replaced with a heart of flesh. A heart that's tender, warm towards God and towards other people. "I'll put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and obey my rules."

And sometimes we hear that sort of thing, and we think, "Oh, that sounds

very restrictive. That sounds like it's not—I don't really want to become a slave to someone else." But when you understand that God's rules are very much aligned with that wisdom and righteousness that I was talking about, that idea that God knows how this world works, God knows how you work and how you work best in His world, in relationship with Him, God knows how to bring about human joy and life and peace and flourishing. His rules are simply an expression of that.

You know, when you think about a sports game, the rules aren't a restriction. They help you play the game in a way that's not chaos, right? If everyone just ignored the rules because they want to do their own thing, it's just—there's no game anymore. There's no fun there, right? So when He talks about, "I'll put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes," He's not talking about people who are just obsessed with ticking boxes on rules. He's talking about people who live life to the fullest in right relationship with God and in right relationship with people, who have life and joy and peace in their very heart as they think about how they relate to others and how they relate to God. They know how God works and how life works, and they know how to relate. That's a good thing.

And one of the questions we must ask ourselves this morning is, have you experienced that? Have you experienced that inner cleansing, the baptism of the Holy Spirit as Jesus enters into your heart, changes you from the inside out, gives you peace about all the wrong that you've done because you know it was covered by His blood? Gives you a tenderness towards God and towards others? Gives you a delight in living life in right relationship with Him and with those around you? And that's a good thing.

Jesus is being painted as a remarkable man, isn't He? But it gets better. Last one. Look at John 1:51. Here Jesus says something about Himself. "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending." Now that's a weird thing to say. But what He's referring to is a few verses back in Genesis. Genesis 28:16-17, "Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.' And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.'" I think I've missed a verse. Hang on, give me a second.

We're back in Genesis 28:12. What He's talking about, what Jacob's observing and being amazed at is this: "He dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." This is what he sees, a ladder connecting heaven and earth. And that's why when he sees this, he says, "Whoa, this is the dwelling place of God. This is the house of God," which is temple language. It's Eden language. It's a place where God and

earth are connected. This is the way the world is meant to be.

And so when Jesus says, "Hereafter you shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man," He's talking about that ladder that Jacob saw. He's talking about the fact that Jesus is that ladder. Jesus is the connecting point between heaven and earth. And ever since Eden, where our forefather Adam sinned and broke apart heaven from earth because heaven cannot dwell where sin reigns, ever since that time, we have needed God to build a bridge between us and Himself. We've needed heaven to come down and reunite with earth that we might have all the peace that we were designed for, all the communion with God that we were designed for. And Jesus says, "I am that connecting point. I am going to bring heaven and earth back together." And of course, that's what we see happen right at the end of time in Revelation 21. "I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'" This is what it looks like when Jesus finishes His work of joining heaven and earth.

And the reality is that everyone who comes to Jesus Christ and is struck in faith and submission to Him receives a foretaste of this. Heaven coming down and glory filling our soul. So before we see Jesus do anything in John's gospel, we see all of this language pulling on deep desires in the human heart, pulling on a great history of Israel's prophecies and life. And Jesus being portrayed as the answer there. He's the king, He's the prophet, He's the deliverer, He's the lamb, He's the one who's going to baptize with the spirit, He's the one who's going to join heaven and earth.

And so just very, very briefly, I want to show you how people respond to this. Firstly, look at John the Baptist. In verse 20, he says, "I am not the Christ." In verse 23, he says, "I am coming before the Lord to make His path straight." In verse 29, he starts presenting Jesus Christ and saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." And then in verses 36 to 39, he declares again, "Behold the Lamb of God," and his disciples start following Jesus. I think John the Baptist is such a beautiful picture of what every Christian teacher should be. He's not interested in his own throne, in his own platform, his own followers. He's interested in presenting to you Jesus Christ. And I think it's amazing in verse 37, he didn't even tell his disciples to follow Jesus. He didn't have to. He just told them, "This is the Lamb of God. Look at Him. Look at how glorious He is. Look at His majesty." And they knew, "This is the one we want to follow."

And so, John the Baptist understood who Jesus was. What's his response? His response is to lift Him up before others, to show Him in all His glory and to point others to Him, not to worry about himself. He says elsewhere, "I must diminish, but He will increase." And that is a joy to him.

Whatever situation you have, whatever relationships you have in your life, you might be a parent or a friend, a teacher in a classroom. You might be a parent or a grandparent, a Sunday school teacher. You might lead a Bible study. You might stand up here and preach from time to time. Whatever relationship you have, a coworker, if you understand who Jesus is, be like John the Baptist. Lift Jesus up. Say to others, "Behold the Lamb of God. Have you seen the majesty in Him? Have you seen all that He does? Have you seen all that He is? Look at Him."

But then look at the response as people hear about who this Jesus is, verses 37 to 39. Have a look. "The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, 'What do you seek?' And they said to Him, 'Rabbi' (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), 'where are You staying?' So He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day." This is the right response. When you see Jesus lifted up, as I hope you've maybe even seen Him lifted up today, the right response is to follow Jesus, to chase Him down, and to stay with Jesus.

You know the words that are translated there, "staying," when they say, "where are You staying?" And He says, "This is where I'm staying." It's the same word that's translated later on in John's gospel as "abiding." You know when Jesus says, "Abide in Me, and I in you"? Same word. Literally, the disciples are saying, "Jesus, we want to abide with You. Where are You abiding?" And He says, "I'm abiding here." And they go and follow Him and abide with Him there. And that's the question for you today. You might've heard, you might've seen who Jesus is. You might've had Him lifted up before you many, many times, but have you followed Him? Have you chased Him down? Have you relentlessly pursued Him to find out where He is and abide with Him there?

Where is Jesus? How would you abide with Him? Where is He staying today? Well, you'll find Him in His word. Do you abide with Him there? You'll find Him in His people. That's why you should join a local church because any good local church is this sort of place where Jesus lives and where people are abiding with Jesus, and talking about Jesus, and pointing others to Jesus. You'll find Him in prayer. You can abide with Him there.

But then look at what happens to those followers. In verse 40, "One of the

two who heard John speak and followed Him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus." Followers of Jesus bring others to follow Jesus. And why wouldn't you? You remember early on, I was talking about cafes and songs and things. This is what we do when we find something that's glorious, when we find something that's incredible and beautiful, when we find something that meets a deep need in our hearts, we always want others to share in that. And so why wouldn't you? Why wouldn't you bring others to meet the king? Why wouldn't you bring others to meet the great prophet of God? Why wouldn't you bring others to meet God's deliverer, God's sacrifice, the one who's going to save us all, the one who can cleanse your soul?

We see this happen again in verses 44 to 49, as Philip goes to Nathanael, and I love what we see here. Simon Peter, when Andrew came to him, he was not a skeptic. He just came and saw Jesus. Some of your friends might be like that. When Philip goes to Nathanael, Nathanael's a skeptic. Philip says, "We found Him of whom Moses in the law wrote." And Nathanael says, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" "I'm not sure about this," says Nathanael. "I don't know." Doesn't sound good to me.

And I love—I love what Philip says. "Come and see." "Come and see." You know, you might be fearful of talking to your friends about Jesus because you don't have all the answers. "Or they're going to ask me about the manuscripts, and they're going to ask me about evolution. They're going to ask me all these questions, and I don't know if I have the answers." I love Philip's answer: "Come and see," because at the end of the day, you aren't introducing people to Jesus because you've discovered all the answers. You're introducing people to Jesus because you're like John the Baptist, and you know Jesus better than you are. You know that Jesus has the answers. You know that Jesus can actually change people's lives. You can't; your answers can't. Even if you explain to someone the perfect answer to their question, that doesn't mean that they will believe it. It doesn't mean they'll understand it. The only one who can change their very heart is Jesus Christ Himself. "Come and read a gospel with me. Come and meet this man. Come to church; come and hear about Him."

I think that's a great encouragement. And lastly, we see that sometimes, sometimes Jesus is not even presented to people through followers. Look at verse 43. "The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow Me.'" He found Philip. And we see this happen throughout Acts as well. So how was Paul converted? Was Paul converted via evangelism? No, Jesus came and confronted him. And maybe you know someone like that. I've heard testimonies like this. Maybe this is you. You weren't introduced to Jesus by someone else. You didn't receive

a tract or anything. Jesus just interjected into your life and said, "Follow Me." Maybe that's you today. Maybe you're hearing His call. And that is the call of Jesus. The gospel is a declaration of the fact of who Jesus is and a call to submit to His kingship, learn from His teaching, trust in His deliverance from our slavery, find forgiveness in His sacrifice, be baptized by Him in the Holy Spirit, and be reconciled to heaven. Have you followed the man whom God has sent to do all of that? Follow Him. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You that You have sent such a free and full forgiveness, a deliverance, a salvation that cannot be plumbed in its depth and its comprehensiveness. Lord, we pray that the wonder of what You have done would sink deep into our hearts, that we might be so captivated by who Jesus is and what You've done in Him and through Him, and what You will do and are doing. We pray that that would so captivate our hearts, Lord, that we cannot but tell others about Him. That we would see that He is the one to whom we must go at all times, that He is the answer to all of our griefs, all of our sorrows, all of our sin, all of our problems. That He is our great master and king. Lord, we thank You, we praise You. We pray that we would know these things more. In Jesus' name, amen.