

Jesus is Preaching

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[0 : 01] John chapter 15 and this has become what's mobile frame. Lord we're reminded in this chapter as we hear your words that apart from you we can do nothing.

And so Lord we pray that we would not be apart from you in the preaching and the listening. In this gathering of your people we pray that we would know your presence.

That we would know your nearness. And we pray that you would be at work for your glory. For the encouragement of your people. And for the salvation of souls. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

There's some passages in scripture and we come to them and we struggle to kind of get into them. Some passages may be deep in the Old Testament. And as we read through them they just seem to be thousands of miles away from us. And thousands of years away from our experience.

[1 : 04] So we find it hard to kind of step into the shoes of the characters that are before us. But today with John 15 opening it shouldn't be that difficult. Because in John 15 as we gather and turn back to this passage.

We find ourselves in a place in John's gospel where Jesus is preaching. We're midway through a sermon essentially.

It's a sermon that began at the beginning of John chapter 13. In the upper room. The upper room discourse as it's known. And it finishes at the end of John chapter 16.

And so in John chapter 15 we're midway through a sermon. Jesus is preaching.

And gathered around Jesus. A little like we're gathered around the word of God today. We're the disciples. So that's the context.

[2 : 13] Jesus is preaching. And around them are a gathering of the Lord's people. But in that gathering. Especially as we go back to John chapter 13.

At the beginning of our sermon. There were two categories of people. Before Jesus. And today in this gathering. There are still two categories.

Of people. Who are in this place. And you and I will fit into one. Of these two categories. So the question I want to pose from the outset.

Is which category is it? Firstly there were those. Who are almost in Christ. And secondly.

There were those. Who are abiding. In Christ. And I want to ask that question. From the outset today. Where are you? Are you in Christ?

[3 : 19] Abiding. In the vine. Or are you apart. From him. So we're going to look at these two categories.

And first of all. We look at those who are. Almost. In Christ. And. To see almost in Christ. Is in other ways. A more gentle way of saying.

They were lost. Sometimes. If you think about sermons. And people listening. Sometimes. During a sermon. In the course of the sermon.

You lose people. And when I stand here. I'm very aware of that. Sometimes. There were those.

Who were with you. At the beginning of the sermon. But they're not with you.

By the end. Occasionally. There's a bit of drama. In a service. Something is said. And a chair gets moved. And up gets somebody. And they walk out the door. Or. But more commonly.

[4 : 16] You just see. The eyes glaze over. You see sleep take over. Or disinterest. Creep in. And you begin to.

To wonder. What's going through their minds. Maybe they're. Working out the number of fields. To put out. Maybe. They're thinking about. What they're going to do. Next sermons. Maybe they're thinking about. What state the potatoes are in.

As they've been boiling up. Role for the last. Two and a half hours. But you see that. As a preacher. You see. That there are some people. Who are with you. At the beginning of the sermon.

But they're gone by the end. And by this point. John 15. Judas. He was gone. Judas. Iscariot. Had been there. As the sermon began. As he had been with Jesus. Over these three years. But by this point.

[5 : 13] John 15. Judas had been lost. Lost quite literally. From the gathering. He had. As it says in. Verse 2. Jesus speaks in. Verse 2.

Of John 15. About branches being cut off. Judas. Had been cut off. By this point. He has. As it says in. John 13.

And verse 30. He had. He'd gone out. Into the night. To betray Jesus. And that betrayal. A selling of Christ.

Was for. Thirteen measly. Pieces. Of silver. That he never. He never enjoyed. That he never spent. That he never invested. Thirty.

Pieces of silver. That will. That will. Haunt him. For all eternity. And the point. I want to make. As we think about. That gathering.

[6 : 07] That was there. At the beginning. With Judas. Present. Is that. Judas. Was. Almost. In Christ. But Judas.

Was not. In Christ. Judas. Despite. Being so close. To Jesus. For so long. Was.

And he will. Eternally. Be. In a. Termented. State. Of being. Apart. From Christ. And Jesus. As he speaks. About that.

Withering. And that. Burning. Of the branches. In verse. Six. Of chapter. Fifteen. That will be. Judas. His eternal. State. It's graphic.

It's alarming. And yet. That's the state. Of the one. Who's cut off. And for Judas. Hell. Will be.

[7 : 03] All the more. Unbeatable. Because he had. So many opportunities. And he had. So many reasons.

To trust. Jesus. But he determined. With the free will. That God gave him. That he would not. Even though Judas. Day after day. After day. Could see. The perfect. Faithfulness. Of Christ. He would not.

Put his faith. In him. And so we see Judas. As one. Who was. Almost. In Christ. But he was. And will eternally. Be. Lost. Sisters. Tell us. It would be. Inventor. For Judas. Had he never been born. All these opportunities.

[8 : 05] Ten thousand reasons. Or more. And he swept them aside. And said. I will. Not. Trust. And you know.

It's possible. For us. To be allowed. To get so close. To Jesus. Jesus. And yet. Not be saved. It's possible.

For us. To hear. So many sermons. And become. So. Literate. In our. Vibros. It's possible. For us. To see. Amazing. Miracles. It's possible. For us. To be able. To experience. Or speak. To people. Who have. First hand. Experienced. God's. Revival power. And yet.

Still be lost. It's possible. For us. To know. The blessing. Of God. In so many. Different ways. Day after day. And yet.

[9 : 09] Still not being. In heaven. So the exhortation. Here. Is a compelling one. Is a serious one. And it's.

Don't. Be almost. In Christ. Because. Almost. In Christ. Is not. In Christ. Just like.

An almost. Goal. Is not. A goal. If Scotland. Were to be rewarded. For all their. Almost goals. They'd be in the world cup. Every year.

But they're not in the world cup. They came so close. They hit the post. They hit the bar. They did so much. They came so close. They almost did it.

But in the cold light. Of qualification. As the world cup. Approaches. What we will see. Is that. They are not there. They have no place.

[10 : 13] An almost goal. An almost. Qualification. Is a non-qualification. Now think about it. In terms of the fisherman. Almost catching a fish.

Is not catching a fish. You speak to people. Who have been fishing. Did you get anything? Well I have four. Four bites. I almost had three. But how many do you have?

Well I have none. You can't eat. An almost fish. For your dinner. You know. Almost. Is a dangerous word.

Remember Paul. When he's speaking with Agrippa. In Acts 26. Agrippa says to Paul. Almost. Almost. Thou persuadest me.

To be. A Christian. As far as we know. He wasn't persuaded. And he was. Almost.

[11:11] Is a dangerous place. To be in. And I make this point often. Because I believe that. There are people here. In this fellowship.

And if we're in exactly this place. It's great to see them. Week after a week. It's great to be able to. To speak about the gospel with them.

And it's great to. To hear that receptiveness. That there is. And they're almost there it seems. And yet still not.

And I want to say. In love with. The scriptures open before us. Learn from Agrippa. Learn from Judas Iscariot. Don't be almost in Christ.

Don't sit in the chairs. And listen to the gospel calls. And read your Bible. And pray. And yet still resist. Judas for. 30 measly pieces of silver.

[12:19] That he threw away. In distress. He held back. What have you got in your hands? That's causing you.

To persistently resist. The advances. Of Jesus. Don't be almost in Christ. For told in the two people. One. Make your calling. And your election. Sure. You know. We like to be sure. About important issues.

Unimportant issues. We're. We're relaxed on. You don't spend too much time. Thinking about these things. But. When the issues. Have big ramifications.

We like to be sure about. Before you set off. The storm. In your car. You want to be sure. That your car is roadworthy. Before we cross.

[13:20] A bridge. On foot. Or in a car. We want to be sure. That that bridge. Will hold our weight. We like to be sure. That the pension fund.

That we're. Paying into. If we're paying into one. One day. It will yield something. It will be reliable. Because these things. Are the important things. But how much more.

Should we want to be sure. That we're in Christ. How much more. Should we want to be sure. That we're heaven bound.

How much. Should we want to be sure. That we're not. Almost. In Christ. Like Jesus was. But we're abiding in Christ.

Like we are in. So that's. The first point. There were those. At the beginning of that sermon. Who were almost in Christ. But were eternally lost.

[14:24] And secondly. We come to. Those who are abiding in Christ. Those who were saved. And I want to think. Now about. What it looks like. To be.

Positioned as one. Who's. Who's abiding. Or who is remaining in Christ. Depending on the translation. You have. And I want to think about this. In terms of. First of all. What abiding in Christ. Is not. And then secondly. Just in conclusion. We'll come to thinking about. What abiding in Christ is. So first of all.

Abiding in Christ. Is not being clever. Abiding in Christ. Does not mean. That we are. In a state of. Of cleverness. Just look at the. The disciples.

The disciples. They weren't. The intelligentsia. Of their day. They weren't. All graduates. With. First class honors. From the University. Of Jerusalem. They were just.

[15:19] Ornery men. That Jesus. Chose. It says in Mark 3. 14. To be with him. Five of them. Were fishermen. One of them.

Was a. A tax collector. And we're not. Crystal clear. We're not sure. What the rest of them. Actually do. But they weren't. Noted. For their. Cleverness.

For their. Intellectual prowess. So abiding in Christ. Does not mean. Being clever. Remember. Peter and John. When they're before. The Sanhedrin. In Acts chapter 4.

And verse 13. It says. When they saw. The courage. Of Peter and John. And realized. That they were. Unschooled. Ordinary men. They were astonished.

And they took note. That these men. Had been. With. Jesus. I wonder.

[16:17] Will anyone. Take note today. As we meet them. As the day goes on. Will anyone. Take note. That we have been. With Jesus. And as the week develops.

As we go to our work. As we spend time. With some of our friends. And our family. As we get involved. In all the activities. Of the week.

Will there be people. Who look at us. And they take note. That we. Have been with Jesus. And I suppose.

The question before that. Is. Have this morning. Before we came here. Have we been with Jesus. So that's what the disciples. Were called to.

That's what the disciples. Are still called. To be with him. And we have a promise. In the corporate sense.

[17:17] That when two or three gather. He will be with us. This morning. Have you. Have I. Been with him. And will people.

See. As they did. With Peter and John. That ordinary as we are. There's something. Extraordinary about us. It's the fact.

That we have been. With. Jesus. But the point here. To note. First of all. Is that. Abiding in Christ. Is not being clever.

Abiding in Christ. Is not dependent. On your cleverness. On your intellectual. Abilities. You haven't got a sunny CV. You haven't got.

Six degrees. No problem. You don't have to be. In the intellectual. Elite. To be abiding. In Christ. The second thing.

[18:15] Abiding in Christ. Is not. Is it's not. Being crystal clear. Not being clever. That's the first thing. Second thing. Is it's not being crystal clear. The disciples. They were full.

Absolutely. Jam-packed. Full of questions. You know. Like little children. A certain age. They have question. After question. After question. After question.

It can be tiresome. The disciples. As we track them. Through the gospels. They are full. Of questions. Now. Why were they full.

Of questions. The answer. To that question. Is because they weren't. Telling the answers. They asked questions. Because they didn't know. The answers. And even if we just.

Step back. One chapter. And look for. Illustrations. Of that. We have one. John chapter 14. We have questions. Thomas.

[19:11] In verse 5. Says to Jesus. Lord. We don't know. Where you're going. So how can we know. The way. To the place. That you're going. I thank you.

We are. For this question. How many times. Have you been blessed. By the answer. To that question. It's a relentless. Shackle. Or we can go. Just three or four.

Verses on. To verse 8. And we've got. Philip. And Philip. Is saying to Jesus. Can you show us. The father. And Jesus.

Then goes on. To explain. About the trinity. And the fact. That he is son. And God is father. And God is holy spirit. And they're one. And three. And one.

But that's just one chapter. Just eight verses. We could go. All the way. Through the gospels. And uncover. Question after question. Which shows us.

[20:08] How unclear. The disciples were. On who Jesus was. And what he was about. And yet. Eleven of the twelve.

Were abiding in Christ. Sometimes. Sometimes you'll hear people. Saying. When you challenge them. About. Where they are.

Spiritually. Sometimes. Often we'll hear people. Say. Well. I don't know enough. To become a Christian. I don't know enough. To be a Christian. I haven't.

I haven't got. All the way through my Bible yet. I haven't got. A firm grasp. With the idea. I don't know enough. To be a Christian. Or I'm not clear enough. In my.

Theological understanding. Well. How much. Did the disciples. Actually know. Abiding in Christ. Is not being.

[21:05] Crystal clear. On all the issues. How much. Did the. The thief on the cross. Know. When he trusted Christ. Not much. And yet.

He was a sure. Paradise. And what. Did the women. At the well know. When Jesus. Came along. To him. And said. Can I get a drink. Please. Not much. Because she trusted Christ.

And she became. Probably the best evangelist. That we have. In the gospel. What. Did Zacchaeus. Know. When he came. Back in the tree. Not much.

And yet. Very. Quickly. He was. Trusting. And following. Christ. All you and I. Really need to know. Is what. John Newton knew. When his mind was going. His memory had failed. And somebody asked him. About his assurance.

[22:10] When he came to knew him. Almost on his deathbed. And said. What do you remember. He says. All. I remember. Is that I.

Am a great sinner. And Christ. Is. My. Great Savior. And if. You know. That you are a great sinner. The Holy Spirit. Has shown you that. If you can see. Christ. And his. Atoning word.

On the cross. And it makes sense to you. Because Christ. The Holy Spirit. Is revealed. That to you. If you see that.

You know enough. You and I. You and I. Don't have to have. The crystal clarity. And all. Theological issues. Before. Becoming a Christian. And if you're waiting.

[23 : 06] For that. You'll never come. The disciples. Had many questions. All disciples will. But they were abiding in Christ.

So. Abiding in Christ. It's not about. Being clever. It's not about. Being crystal clear. It's not even about. Being consistent. How many times.

Have you heard it said. Well. You know. I. I could never. Become a Christian. Or I could never. Go to the table. Certainly. Because. Well. What if I mess up. What if I get things wrong. What if I make a mess of things.

What if I can't. Keep on going. What if my witness. For Jesus. Doesn't remain as bright. And strong. As it should be. What if I can't. Be consistent. And there's good motivation.

Behind. These kind of questions. No one wants to dishonor Christ. By the way. That we live. But the reality is. That there is not. One person. Here.

[24 : 08] Or anywhere. Who will live. A perfect. Consistent. Christian life. The disciples.

Are there for. An encouragement. To show us that. I mean. What a clue. Jesus shows. To be his disciples. They're almost like.

Dad's army. Bumbling through the gospels. How many times. Does Jesus. Have to say to them. Do you still. Not understand. Can you still. Not see it. Do you still.

Have no faith. How many times. Does Jesus. Have to spell out. For them. The same things. Over and over again. How many times. Does he have to tell them. That he has to die.

And he has to rise. And yet. They don't get it. How many times. Do they let Jesus down. By their failures. They were.

[25 : 04] Far from consistent. In the following. Of Jesus. And in their obedience. To Jesus. Jesus. And yet.

They were Christ's. Chosen. Disciples. And in speaking. To them. In verse 3. Jesus says. You. Eleven.

Are already clean. Because of the word. I. Have spoken to you. What an encouraging verse. That must have been. For them. As they. Experienced it. And as they. Remembered it. And what an encouraging. Verse for us.

If you look in the mirror. Of God's word. And we see ourselves. In the disciples. In the mirror. And yet. Jesus says to them. Despite all your.

[26 : 07] Past failures. You're already clean. And Jesus knew. Peter would soon deny him. He's just told him that.

And Jesus. Knew that the others. Would deserve him. He knew. That they would fail him. He knew. How. They would be. Unreliable. And inconsistent.

And yet. They're declared by Jesus. To be. In the present tense. Clean. Despite what was back there.

Despite what was still to come. He declares them. Without qualification. To be clean. How could that be? When he knew.

What he knew. And let me know. What they were about to go into. How could that be? How could they be clean? It's because their cleanness.

[27 : 10] Their status. As those who were in Christ. Was not to do with their personal. Consistency. But it was to do with the fact. That they were connected.

To Christ. So abiding in Christ. Is not being clever. It's not being crystal clear. At having all the answers.

As you would ever have them. Not in this world. It's not about being consistent. And living the perfect life. This is beyond us. But it's about being connected.

To Christ. Abiding in Christ. Is about being connected. To Christ. This is how we conclude. Jesus says in verse 4. I am the vine. Jesus says in verse 5. I am the vine. And you are the branches.

[28 : 10] I am the branch. I am the branch. I am the think of your garden. How does a branch stay alive? How does a branch.

Be a branch? Well it has to be connected. To the vine. It has to be connected. To the plant. And Jesus. Illustration that he uses.

Is so powerfully simple. The life of the branch. Comes from the connection. To the vine. The strength of the branch. Comes from the connection. To the vine. The fruitfulness.

Of the branch. Comes from the connection. To the vine. And Christians. Are those who are connected. To Jesus. Are you connected. To Jesus? That's the question today.

Not how clever are you? Not how clear are you? Not how consistent are you? Are you connected. To Jesus? Christians. Christians are those.

[29 : 14] Who are in union. With Christ. Christians are those. Who have a living. Relationship. With Jesus. Where we speak to him. Day by day.

We pray. And we listen to him. Day by day. As we come to his word. And we obey him. Day by day. To show our love for him. Are you connected.

Are you connected. To Jesus? How do you connect? How do we enter in. For the first time.

To this. Life. Giving relationship. Well it's by faith. By faith. In the words. That he has spoken to us. That he spoke to them. By faith in him.

That he is God the son. That he is the savior. By faith in his finished work. In Calvary. His death. And his resurrection. That's how we connect.

[30 : 18] Sometimes. We might have visited our show. We'll come to our house. With our devices. With our phones. And our iPads. And their gadgets. And they'll be there for 10 minutes. And once.

You've exhausted. The conversation. And they've leaned everything interesting. Out of you. For the first 7 or 8 minutes. They'll say. Is there any chance I can get on your network? The chance I can connect to the network.

And you'll say. Oh yes. No problem. They'll say. You just taught me through how I do it. Oh yeah.

Yep. Yep. Well there's this network name. You've got to select that name. And is there a password? Yes. There's a password.

There's the password. So you. You seek the word to them. You tell them how they can connect. But they have to believe what you say. They have to act to it.

They have to put their faith. In your words. Before they can connect. To the network. How do we connect to Christ?

[31 : 17] Not just by knowing. Not just by hearing his words. As we sit in these chairs. But by believing in his words.

By acting on them. By trusting him. By trusting him. He is the way. So follow him.

He is the truth. So believe in him. He is the life. He is the vine. He is the life. He is the life. He is the life. So come to him.

For that life. Turn from sin. Turn from trusting yourself. Turn from trusting.

All the advisors in the world. Who want to tell you something different. And turn to Jesus. And listen to his words.

[32 : 20] Put your faith in him. That's what makes you a Christian. That's what takes you from that state. Of being apart from Christ.

Even if you need you almost there. It takes you into that state. Of abiding in him. You might say. Well could it really be that easy?

Well think about the internet example again. Someone comes to your house with an iPad. They listen to your words. They use your password. They connect. They connect.

Before you know it. They are watching videos. And they are on the internet. And they are checking their emails. And all that stuff. They connect. They benefit from your investment. You pay.

But they gain. That's how salvation works. That's how salvation works. The price has been paid by Jesus.

[33 : 22] The only way. The only name. The only password. By which we can be saved. Is Jesus. So if we listen to Jesus' words.

If we believe in Jesus' name. If we trust in Christ. For this work on the cross. We connect with him. And we are given access.

And we benefit. From this network. Of forgiveness. And salvation. And spiritual riches. That are ours. In Christ.

We become free. As those. Who are abiding. In Christ.

It's all of grace. God's riches. His salvation. His eternal life. At Christ's expense.

[34 : 20] To our salvation. It's not about being clever. It's not about being crystal clear.

On all the points of theology. It's not about. It's not about. Demonstrating our. Consistency. In our. Righteous life. But it's been about.

Being connected. With Christ. As Savior. And receiving. The grace. That flows. From him. To us.

And we believe in him. So don't be almost. In Christ. Don't leave us. Him again.

Today. Please. As one who's almost. In Christ. Put your faith in him.

[35 : 19] Trust. Connect. With the Bible. And abide. In Christ. Lord God.

We pray. That. You would take. These words. These thoughts. These meditations. And that. You would. Use them. For your glory. And Lord.

We pray. That. We would. Leave. Here. Today. Knowing. That we are not. Almost. In Christ. But we are abiding. In him. That we are not.

Almost. Christians. But we are truly. Christians. That we are truly. Saved. And we pray that. As we go from here. People. Who meet us. As we.

Encounter them. As the day and the week goes on. We know. That we are Christians. That we know. That we have been. With Jesus. And we pray these things.

[36 : 16] In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.