

Receiving, Spreading the Message | John 20:30-31 | 11.10.19 | Kevin P. Larson

Today's our last day in the gospel of John. We'll spend the next couple of weeks talking about our commitment to sending out leaders to plant churches. And then it will be time to go Old Testament in Karis. We'll spend a few weeks in Isaiah during Advent. We'll then begin a regular rhythm through the Psalms. We'll jump in the book of Esther. Beginning after the first of the year. I'm excited.

Our theme in John has been "Knowing I Am." Maybe you noticed. It has a dual meaning. Jesus throughout the gospel calls himself the "I Am," which is the covenant name for God. I think we've come to know Him, God in the flesh, better, together. However, when we come to know Him. When we experience life in Him by faith. We start to see ourselves differently. As individuals. As family. I know who I am in Him. And the core thing we learn is that through His perfect life and painful death, we are loved by Him. We can share the label John gives himself throughout the gospel - "the one whom Jesus loved." I think we've come to understand that better, as well.

Just a few weeks back, Pastor Aarik was up here. It was just a few days after the release of Kanye West's new album. And he joked that, if I had been preaching that morning, the message would have been 50% Kanye lyrics. Now I'm not going to do that this morning. But so as not to disappoint him up here, or any of you out there, I'm going to spend a few minutes talking about his conversion. I get that he's a complicated guy. I mean, aren't we all? But man, he sure seems changed. Have you seen some of his interviews? So humble. So joyful. And I praise God, as I think we all should.

Now as we close up our study through the gospel of John this morning, we're going to get back to him. I want us to think together about what his conversion means as we look in the mirror and out our window. But I want to think of it all alongside the message we've seen here in the gospel of John. And I want us to think about why we did this massive study of this book of the Bible in the first place.

So here are the two things I'm going to try to accomplish this morning. **First**, I want to talk a bit about how we preach here in Karis and why. **Second**, I want us to think about what John says in this book, and what it means for us. How we preach here in Karis Church and why. What John's message is and what difference it makes.

### **Why Expositional Preaching**

**First, how we preach here in Karis and why.** If you've been here for awhile, you've no doubt heard us talk about expositional or expository preaching. I think the best definition comes from Mark Dever. He calls expositional preaching that which makes the main points of a passage of Scripture the main points of the sermon.

Now this looks like a guy like me digging carefully into a group of verses, mining them for what the Spirit-inspired author intended by them, passionately explaining it all to you, and boldly encouraging us all to love and obey what we've found.

We expose the meaning of the passage. Expositional. We pull back the curtain. We dig in to the passage. We proclaim what it means. We seek to apply it to our lives. That's what we seek to do weekly here in Karis. Now it sure isn't easy, but it's pretty simple.

Now this is usually opposed to what could be called topical preaching. There I come up with a theme or idea, and then I go find a passage of Scripture that supports that topic. With expository preaching, we do the opposite. We go to a passage of Scripture. We study what's there. And that leads to an idea or theme or sometimes several. And that makes all the difference.

Now this generally looks like going through books of the Bible, verse by verse, over an extended period of time. And that's why we're finishing out a series through John that began on February 4th of 2018. Right around 70 sermons, I believe. That's what we do. But why? Here are some reasons why we think this is the best way to go.

**It makes us students of God's word.** The one preaching has to study the Bible during the week. The ones listening are taught how to study Scripture on Sundays. We all grow together in how we study and apply God's word.

**It sets our focus on Scripture.** We don't just talk about what we're already interested in or what we've already come to know. We force ourselves to hear from God. From what He has revealed to us. And as we listen, we grow.

**It forces us to deal with our entire Bibles.** We don't just keep talking about our favorite topics. We can't avoid difficult or controversial texts. Whatever's up next, we take head on. And we're better for it.

**It gives us a balanced, biblical diet.** If we move through expositional series, and ideally move back and forth from Old Testament to New, we'll encounter all the Bible's genres. We'll grapple with all of the many themes of Scripture.

**It carries us to the person and point of the Bible.** The Bible is about God and His glory, and not ours, or certainly the preacher's. It's not about what we do or don't do. It's about what Jesus has done. It's about the gospel. As we faithfully walk through the Bible, verse-by-verse, we'll see who God is and what He's done for us there.

**It grants confidence and boldness to the church.** There becomes no doubt where authority is found. Members can know they're hearing from God, and not just a man. Preachers are freed from fearing people. They can focus on obeying the Lord. On proclaiming His words.

**It leads to faithful Christians and churches.** As we listen to God's word, week in and week out, we hear what God calls us toward. And we begin to obey. We apply what we hear. As individuals. As a community. We can hold each other to what we find in our Bibles. And let God shape us. We're far less likely to follow the surrounding culture and stray from Christ.

**It ensures we handle verses in context.** We see each week how what is said fits within the book we're studying. We see how it fits in the Bible's story as a whole. We better understand what God says.

**It makes sermon preparation easier.** You guys show up each week, basically knowing what's going to be talked about. You can prepare. You can pray. I don't have to stay up all Saturday night worrying about what I'm going to talk about. It doesn't mean we can't make exceptions as God leads, but our schedule is set. And the Spirit can and does lead that way, as well.

**It ensures relevance without making it the goal.** The Bible may be an ancient text, but it's just as relevant today as it was back then. We can sacrifice what's ultimate, what's timeless on the altar of what's cool and hip and completely miss out. Expository preaching, though, guards us from that.

**It leads to application that impacts everyone.** If we do a series on parenting, what about the non-parents? If we talk about the workplace, what about kids? Sure, we can do messages about those topics from time to time. But it's better to just preach what we find in God's word and then apply it to different groups of people.

**It immerses us in the Bible's world.** It's one thing to learn Spanish. It's another thing to get off a plane in Spain. When we camp in the Bible over a lifetime and over a book for many weeks and years, we begin to look at God's world through God's eyes. It changes our perspective together.

**It forces us to grow together.** Sitting in front of God's word makes us humble. It cultivates a hunger. His word often surprises us. It frequently smashes us.

As Tim Keller has put it, "Contemporary people tend to examine the Bible, looking for things they can't accept. Christians should reverse that, allowing the Bible to examine us, looking for things God can't accept." We get used to being challenged, being shaped by God and His Word.

It gives glory to God and God alone. He's the one who creates life. He saves sinners. Through His Word. He's the one who grows life. He grows sinners, too. Through His word. As we do what He asks, He does what He does. And He alone gets the praise. As we seek to faithfully preach God's word, we proclaim our faith in Him. That He'll grow His church in His way.

That's why we do expositional preaching. Now it's not as if we can't from time to time take on relevant topics from up here. We should maybe even do it a bit more. And it also doesn't mean that it always has to take this verse-by-verse through a book format. During Advent, we're going to do some scattered passages from the book of Isaiah. But each of those messages will take the points from the passage of Scripture and make them the points of our sermon. We'll explain a passage of Scripture. We'll encourage you to embrace it with your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

### What John Teaches Us

I now want to turn back to the book of John, to an extended passage of Scripture. You can do an expositional sermon over a whole book. What does John the apostle, inspired by the Spirit, teach us here in his gospel account? What is he trying to push us toward?

Well, that's not hard to figure out. Not in the book of John, at least. He gives us his main point, his thesis statement, in John 20:30-31. Listen with me to those verses again.

**John 20:30** Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

**John 20:31** but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Why's he writing? "So that you may believe" in Christ. And that "you may have life in his name." Now throughout the book, we see Jesus having conversations with people. We see Him addressing crowds. And as He talks, as He preaches, He calls people to faith. He calls people to life in Him.

As we close up this series, by way of review, I want us to hear some of those words again. I want us to see some of those faces again. And I want to call you to two things. I first want you to see you in these people in John. And I second want you to see these people in John around you. Look in the mirror. Look out your window. John's words are just as relevant today.

The confused leader in **chapter 3**, who can't grasp what he hears. He's not sure what to do. Jesus says to Him. Receive my whole new way of living.

The hurting woman in **chapter 4**, who's been used and abused. Christ tells her: those men won't satisfy you. I'm what you need. Drink of me and you'll never thirst again.

The desperate dad in **chapter 4**, with a son dying in his arms. He trusts in Jesus. The Lord says to him, "Your son will live."

The suffering man who hasn't walked for years. In **chapter 5**, Jesus asks him if he wants to be healed. He gets to taste life in Jesus right then and there.

The angry men in **chapter 5**, trying to fight for everything they've known. The Lord tells them: hear, believe. Receive life. Escape death and judgment.

The hungry crowds who can't seem to get any satisfaction at all. Jesus tells them in **chapter 6**: I'm the bread of life. I'll fill your hunger.

The thirsty worshippers in **chapter 7** who can't decide to mock or to bow. He says to them: come to me and drink. Believe. Experience life.

The stubborn hecklers who don't even know they're enslaved. Jesus says, in **chapter 8**. Hear my words. Experience freedom.

The blinded teachers in **chapter 9**, who can't believe Christ's claims for Himself. He tells them: I'm the light of the world.

The wandering leaders who've failed to shepherd God's people. Christ says, in **chapter 10**: I'm the good shepherd. I'll lead you well. I'll give my life. Receive me.



The **grieving** sisters in **chapter 11**. Jesus says, I'm the resurrection, the life. Believe in me. Overcome death.

The **cynical** disciple in **chapter 12**. Who questions Mary's worship and soon betrays Christ. Jesus says to him: I'm right in front of you. You should be doing what she's doing. Receive life in me.

The **fickle** crowds who first wave the branches and then nail Him to a tree. **John 12**. Jesus, on that donkey, communicates: I'm your King. Not the One you want maybe. But the One who need.

The **unbelieving** masses, also in **chapter 12**. Christ tells them: believe in me and you also believe in my Father. Come into the light. Experience my life.

The **arrogant** student, Peter, who won't even take Jesus's help, in **chapter 13**. The Lord tells him: take my cleansing. Receive my inheritance.

The **troubled** twelve, who can't figure out what's going on. What's the plan? Where is Jesus going? He tells them, in **chapter 14**. Don't be worried. Believe in God. Believe also in me.

The **feeble** followers, who don't know how they'll do what He asks. He tells them. I'm the vine. Abide in me, like branches. **Chapter 15**. I'll send my Spirit. He'll help you. **Chapter 16**. I'm also praying for you. **Chapter 17**. Trust me. I'll give you my life.

The proud politicians in chapter 18. The ignorant Romans in chapter 19. He continues to hold out life. As He goes to His death.

The discouraged woman, Mary. The doubting disciples. The unfaithful man, Peter, again. In chapters 20 and 21. Jesus keeps calling them to faith. He keeps holding forth His life.

Now as I said earlier, look in the mirror. Look out the window. See you in these people in John. Also see these people in John all around you. If we're honest, we're the confused. The hurting. The desperate. The suffering. And, so often, we're the angry, too.

We're hungry and thirsty. Stubborn, as well. Blinded. Wandering. Grieving, ourselves. Cynical. Fickle. Unbelieving. Arrogant. Troubled. Feeble. Proud. That's us. The ignorant. The discouraged. The doubting. The unfaithful. We struggle to believe. We turn to other things for life. And we need to hear these words from Jesus every day. The call to believe. The hope of new life. And, that with John the apostle, we are loved.

I try to put the "cross chart" up on the screen every few months in Karis. It works against this idea that we slide into. This idea that the longer we're a Christian the less we need Jesus. Notice the point of our conversion, when we become a Christ follower. There we understand a bit about just how holy God is and how sinful we are. We can feel the cross resolve that tension in our hearts.

But we often think that the more we grow, the less sin there is to battle and the easier things get. But it's actually the opposite. We move past the superficial sins. We dive into deeper stuff. We can see further into the dark recesses of our hearts. We can see just how holy and perfect the Lord is.

We can see the gap widening between our sin and His holiness. And we can choose to fill in that gap through minimizing our sin or lessening what God demands. Or we can fill it up with the cross of Jesus. And let our hearts overflow with joy. We need to walk by faith. We need the life of Jesus. We need it every minute. We need it more and more each day.

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And so do so many around us. They need to hear where love and life are found. In Jesus. By faith. Again, John's agenda here is to get us to believe. He wanted those in that day, and all who would read this work, to run to Jesus. To find hope in Him. And that should be our agenda, as well. Right? To see those around us changed. But do we really believe that we'll ever see that?

One thing I've been convicted about, since Kanye's conversion, is how hard I was on the guy, and even from up here. On April 15th of last year, I talked about Christ referring to himself in the third person in John and I asked, "Who talks this way? Kanye?"

In our first sermon in this building, I preached from **Isaiah 61**. In **Luke 4**, we see Jesus read that passage. The Lord has anointed me. To bring good news to the poor. To free the captives. And Jesus says, all of that is fulfilled in me. I said:

Now imagine if, after reading that passage, I got up here and said, "You know, those verses are all about me!" You'd think I was the most arrogant person on earth. You'd think I had a Kanye or Brady complex or something.

Back in May of 2015, in our series through Acts, I was talking about humility. I was preaching about the dangers of preaching self-esteem to our kids. I warned, "They might end up acting like Charlie Sheen or Kanye West." And I gave you a long quote from Kanye where he called himself a robot, said he was in fact God, and said that his greatest regret was that he could never see himself perform live.

Back in 2009, I mentioned him twice in our study through Luke, using him as an example of human pride. I quoted him calling himself the greatest human being in music. I talked about him running on stage, trying to take a video music award from Taylor Swift and give it to Beyonce instead.

In 2007, we were preaching through Philippians. I mentioned West two weeks in a row. I talked about what he once did when he didn't win an award. He had won Best Hip Hop Artist at the MTV Europe Awards, but he lost the award for best video. He ran on stage, letting expletives fly, screaming, "It cost a million dollars. Pamela Anderson was in it. I was jumping across canyons. If I don't win, the awards show loses credibility."

The next week, I talked about West being on the cover of *Rolling Stone* with a crown of thorns. How Kanye had said he should be written into the Bible.

Also in 2007, during a sermon in Jonah, I referenced Kanye's duel - of record sales - with rapper 50 Cent. How Kanye won handily. And how his head got even bigger as a result.

Now that's at least eight times that I could find that I mentioned Kanye West in a Karis sermon, using him as a negative example. And my kids wonder why I've been talking about his conversion so much. I've been so moved personally listening to the album. And I've been so convicted deeply about the way I viewed the man. Had I been acting like there was someone too far for God? Someone that the Lord couldn't even touch? I think I was.

Now he's gotten some flak for saying that God was using him to show off. But I don't have a problem with that statement at all. That's basically what Paul says about himself in 1 Timothy 1, right? Give it a listen.

**1Tim. 1:15** The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

**1Tim. 1:16** But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

What a reminder, church! That those around us - no matter how hostile - are never too far from God. If Jesus is king, then there is no one - absolutely no one - who is beyond hope!

Maybe we've forgotten our need for the gospel every minute. Maybe we've forgotten who we were when that message struck us.

Were we really any different from them? Were we really any different from him? What if I had millions of Instagram followers and billions of dollars? I might have acted crazier. Maybe the Lord wants to show off by using you to reach your friends. By turning that co-worker's life upside down. By drawing that classmate to His throne. And through that, remind us that we can't save anyone.

Now I don't know if you've heard the story of how Kanye came to faith. But there's this man who works with him some in the music industry in Southern California. He's a part of a church similar to ours - size, theology, everything. He tells his pastor, "Hey, I've been working with Kanye West. I think I'm going to invite him to church." His pastor says, "Do it." And he does. And he comes!

Turns out God is already working on the man's heart. And one of the biggest hip-hop artists of all time, perhaps the icon of arrogance in our age, shows up, hears the gospel, and is radically saved. And what do they do when he gets there? Preach expositionally. Through the gospel of John. Seriously. Yeah, the Lord's showing off alright!

Only God saves. Jesus says back in John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." Therefore, only He gets the glory. But He uses us. He sends us out. As Christ reminds us in chapter 20, verse 21, "As the Father sent me, even so I am sending you." He asks us to go and bear fruit. To proclaim His life. To call people to faith.

Another tool we've been using here in Karis is what's called "The Gospel Wheel." It's a reminder that living on mission isn't really that complicated.

We go in love. We serve and bless. We just try to live our lives in obedience to Christ. Trying to see people move from being a mere acquaintance to someone who follows Jesus.

We ask questions. We listen to people's stories. As they then ask us, we share ours. All along the way, we're praying for God to work. We're looking for opportunities to share the story of Jesus. And pray for the next step. Maybe studying the Bible with them. Bringing them with you to MC. Inviting them to church. God used that with Kanye, right?

**Do you see yourself here in the book of John? Do you see the people all around you here, as well?** I want to end doing something a bit different from the norm here in Karis. I'm going to have the band come up. They're going to start playing in the background. I'm going to ask you to pray about two things. You can sit silently and pray by yourself. You can grab people around you. Or the elders will be up here in the front. You can come up and pray with us.

**First, what are ways you've been running from this life that's found in Jesus?** What are sins you need to turn from? Ask God to show you. Ask God to help you. Share it with someone. Go before the Lord together.  
*Ways not believing the gospel?*

**Second, who around you needs to hear about the life and love found in Christ?** Are there people you've been avoiding out of fear? That you've treated as if they're too far gone? Ask God to forgive you. To bring people to mind. Pray for them this morning. And then go love and serve them this week.

*Let's pray and then spend some time before the Lord here together.*