

# Studying John's Gospel (2)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thanks Thomas. Well, the theme of our time together is that Jesus Christ died in the place of sinners, such as ourselves.

Our opening verse comes from 1 Peter 3 verse 18. Let me read it to us. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.

The Gospel isn't good news for people who think they're sinless, for something that's no one like that. The Gospel is good news for those who know that they're sinners and know that they can do nothing about it themselves, who recognize their sin and recognize their need for Jesus.

And we're going to sing open with Psalm 103 verses 1 to 11. It's a Psalm that praises God for the complete forgiveness that he offers for all who turn to him.

Stand to sing as Dole leads us with Psalm 103. God forgives you all your sins and heals your sickness and distress.

[ 1 : 32 ] Your life he rescues from the grave and prounds you in his tenderness.

He satisfies your deep desire from his unending stores of good so that just by the eagle is saved from death.

It's my deed to his red sand.

The Lord is merciful and kind, To anger slow and full of grace.

He will not constantly reprove, Or in his anger hide his face.

[ 3 : 04 ] He does not punish our misdeeds, Or give our sins their just reward, Our greatest love as Tia's hand, Towards all those who fear the Lord.

Let's come to God in prayer. Heavenly Father, as we come to you in prayer this morning, we recognize that we are unworthy to come into your presence. Lord, we recognize that we are sinners who have turned against you, Who have broken your rules, Who have trespassed in our thoughts, In our words, in our deeds.

Lord, we are not even worthy for your grace and mercy. But even as we acknowledge our sins, Lord, we give you thanks this morning that you are a loving and favorable Father. That you are the Father in heaven who did not just cast us away.

But Lord, rather you sent Jesus Christ into this world. You sent your Son into this world for the sake of sinners like us to stand in our place. And so Lord, we ask you that you would, this morning, even as we confess our sins to you in the quiet of our hearts, Lord, that you would forgive us.

That you would have mercy on us, that you would cleanse us, you would make our hearts new.

Lord, please change us from the inside out. Take possession of our hearts. Change the thoughts of our minds, the desires of our hearts.

[ 4 : 50 ] Wash us clean, we pray, Lord. We pray that you would make us new. Thank you that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the oldest past, the way the new has come. Lord, thank you that that is the work of the gospel.

So we pray even as we acknowledge our sins, that you would be doing that this morning in our hearts as we hear your word. Please be changing us more and more into the holy people that you've saved us to be.

Lord, we thank you that your gospel is good news for sinners because you are God who is merciful and who has sent Christ Jesus to die for sinners.

So we pray that you would lift us up, you'd build us up, encourage us this day. And we pray this in Jesus' name, amen. Well, I want to talk briefly to the kids now.

I want to see you all around here. And you're going to need to be able to see me because I only asked you a question. Are you good at giving directions? Yeah? Yeah? See, I need directions.

[ 5 : 52 ] Helen tells me that I'm terrible at driving and I'm not very good at looking at signs. So I need people to tell me directions. And I'm going to need that especially now because let me get it. I'm going to be blindfolded. And I don't need your help to walk across here. So we're going to make a little obstacle for us, right, Lee? I'm going to have to tell you which way to go. I'm going to try to listen to you guys. So you stick this shoe in this one here. And this one here. Try to step on that. There we go. And then... There we go. Oh, there's a little arrow in the end. Okay, so you've got to try and help me to get inside. Hold it to that microphone over there. So you can all see where I am. So I'm going to put this on. Maybe someone can help me put this on. I can't find myself. So it's right inside my back. It's right for me. It's fine. I'll have to go.

[ 6 : 58 ] It's tight in this up. Okay. Okay, so you're going to have to give me instructions. Okay, tell me where to go. I'll spin around first of all. Okay.

Can you tell me where to go? Go left. Go left. Turn left. No. Turn left.

Turn left. Turn left, okay. Stop.

Go right. Go right. I'm going to be the only one to help me as well. Forward. Forward.

Stop. Left. Left. Left? Are you guys a good game of instruction? Right.

[ 7 : 58 ] Straight ahead. Straight ahead. Left. Left. Move your head. Okay.

Left. This is right. This is left. Just to help you. Left.

Right. Forward. Forward. Stop. Now on. To the left.

To the left. I was kind of like... Shhh. I was kind of like... Oh, this one is not a way. Jump!

What? Jump! Jump with your brain! Like that! Jump forward. Okay. You ready?

[ 8 : 58 ] Jump! Am I there? Yes! Oh, thank you guys! Very good. Good to give you this. You took a ring off when you took it off.

Oh, there you go. I did. Well, thanks. I often fall over, so thanks for helping me to not fall over, guys. That's what I did that. Okay, you're very good at giving directions and instructions. You know the reason I'm telling you this is because today in the passage I'm going to talk about with the grown-ups it's all about a man who gives directions and who points the way.

Do you know what his name was? His name was John the Baptist. And in his whole life he wasn't about saying look at me, look at me. He was all about saying look at Jesus and pointing the way to Jesus.

So when people came to him he said I'm not a big deal. He said I'm not the Christ. I'm not God's savior. I'm not God's rescuer. Look at him.

And he pointed people to Jesus. And the thing is, and so what I want to tell you kids is John the Baptist isn't here today, is he? So how can we, how can he point the way to Jesus for us? And the answer is through the Bible.

[ 10 : 10 ] You see, John our writer he recorded John the Baptist's witness. He recorded the turn left, turn right, all the instructions so that we can know who Jesus is. And at the back there's lots of, at the back there's a bunch of these magazines.

These are John's Gospel as well. And that's where we have all of these instructions pointing us to Jesus. So we can know who Jesus is and why he came to die and how we can believe in him.

So kids, what I want you to remember is you, you helping, you were very good at helping giving me directions to get to the other side of the room. If we want to know how to get to Jesus if we want to know the way to Jesus we can do that.

If we want to know the way to Jesus well John the Baptist gives us directions so do lots of other people. We can read all about it in the Bible. That's what tells us how we can come to know Jesus. So thank you very much for listening.

We're now going to say the Lord's Prayer and we've been saying in Gallic the past few weeks and as many of you know my Gallic isn't that good so Dole has kindly agreed to say it to say it with you and I'm going to keep trying to learn it with you, okay?

[ 11 : 18 ] Over to Dole. How is it Lord?

Appreciate it. Amen. Well thank you kids for listening. I'm just going to pray for you before you head off to Sunday School next door. Isabelle's at the back and she'll take you. Heavenly Father we thank you for the children that you've given us and Lord we thank you that Jesus says let the children, little children come to me for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Lord we pray for these kids that are with us that they will believe in Jesus that they will listen to the directions and they would

come to Jesus and make him their king and they would live for him all the days of their life. Make us a congregation Lord who pray for them and who try to point them to Jesus from God's word. Okay, thank you very much kids. Isabelle's at the back.

Well we're now going to turn in God's word to Isaiah chapter 40 verses 1 to 11. Alistair's going to come and read it to us. Alistair. So Isaiah chapter 40 is one of the passages that is quoted in our next reading.

So Alistair, put your bubble there. Alistair. The heading of this says comfort for God's people. Comfort, comfort my people. Says your God.

[13:18] Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that her warfare has ended.

That her iniquity has pardoned. That she has received from the Lord's hand a 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 are 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. A voice says, cry. And I said, what shall I cry?

All flesh is grass and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The ground shall be covered and the earth shall be covered. And the earth shall be covered.

[14:20] The grass withers and the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flower fades for the word of our God will stand forever.

Get you up to a high mountain of Zion, herald of good news lift up your voice with strength. O Jerusalem.

Herald of good news Lifted up, fear not. Say to the cities of Judah, Behold your God, behold the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him. Behold his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will tend his flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in his arms. He will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. Amen. Thank you, Alastair. Alastair, turn to God now in prayer.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we read these pages of Scripture, we know we're reading words that are all fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Lord, we thank you that the Gospel isn't an afterthought, that Jesus coming to earth isn't an afterthought. Lord, we thank you that it's been your plan from the beginning of time, and that all Scripture is pointing towards it, pointing towards the need for Jesus to come, pointing towards who he is when he comes. Lord, we thank you that as we've just read here that Jesus is the shepherd who will gather his lambs in his arms, who gather them gently. Lord, we thank you that you deal with us tenderly, even though we have sinned against you.

[16:23] Lord, we thank you for your justice. We thank you also for your graciousness, your gentleness. Lord, as we look at all these Old Testament passages this morning that culminate in Christ, Lord, we thank you that for leaving us so many shadows and examples that help us to understand who Jesus is. Lord, we pray that as we read Scripture, we'll do so with minds pointed forward to Christ. Lord, we pray that you would show us yourself through your Word. As we've been thinking about with the kids, we pray that as we read John's Gospel this morning, as we look at other passages in Scripture, Lord, you'd use those to point us to Jesus, to direct us to him. Lord, we know that we can't know the way on our own. We don't even know the first thing about how to come into your presence. We can't without Christ. As we pray that your Word will open up our minds.

Lord, we thank you as we read the Word of God stands forever. The promise is that we reading your Word are true, as true now as they were 2,000 years ago. As Lord, we pray for any this morning who don't know Jesus, whether they're with us in person or online or out in the village, or the villages around us. Lord, we pray that it surely as your Word promises life for all who believe that they would hear that promise. They would come and take hold of life before it is too late. Lord, we recognize that all flesh is like grass, that people are like grass, that our span of life is so short. As we pray that in the time that you give us, that we'll call on the name of the Lord and be saved. Lord, we thank you for the men and women, boys and girls that you have gathered into this room, and next door, men, people who have called on the name of the Lord and have been brought from death to life. Lord, we thank you for your people gathered here in

Carlisleway and across the country, everyone who is meeting on this day to worship you. Lord, we pray that you would use your Word to build us up, that you would bring us from strength to strength in our confidence of who Jesus is. Lord, we so quickly forget how amazing it is that God became flesh for us. The Gospel is old news rather than good news. So we pray that you would write it freshly upon our hearts, that you would encourage us, you'd give us great joy and amazement by the good news that we read. Lord, we also pray for our brothers and sisters in short, as they celebrate the Lord's Supper. Lord, we thank you for that Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, a way for us to look back towards his death and remember his sacrifice for sins, but also look forward to the great feasting that will be in heaven when Christ has finished his work and makes all things new. Lord, we pray that as they take part and they break the bread and they drink the wine, as they look back to Jesus' death, so Lord, you would also cause people to look forward to his coming again. Lord, make your people ready for that day. And Lord, for those who feel unworthy to come to your table, Lord, we thank you that none of us is worthy and none of us can do anything in and of ourselves to make ourselves worthy. We thank you that we are only worthy to come to the table by the blood of Jesus Christ. So we pray that you'd give people assurance this morning and they would rest in Jesus' complete and perfect sacrifice for their sins. Lord, further afield, we want to pray for Addington Community Church. Lord, we thank you for the prayer points of churches that come out weekly from the central offices. And so Lord, we thank you for Addington, where Allie Sewell is serving as the minister. We pray for that church that they would get a building as their permanent home. Lord, we thank you for providing halls and various other places for them to be in over the past few years. But Lord, we recognize that as a congregation, how useful having your own building is for Sundays and midweek as well. We pray that you provide that for them, give them wisdom as they look around, give them the finances to be able to afford something for themselves. Lord, we thank you for all the new people that have joined them since COVID for the ways in which that COVID hasn't been the death of that church plant. We pray for those especially who are on the fringes who are coming along who are interested but aren't yet wouldn't yet call themselves part of your people. We pray that they would feel more part of things. They would ultimately come to know you. We pray for those who are believers who are still really not just getting stuck in. Lord, that they would commit to life in that church family and use their gifts to build up the church with them. We also pray for Angus MacLeod who's training there. We pray that his time there will be really useful in building up his character more like Christ, building up his competence as a minister of your word and that he'd be a great blessing to that congregation even as they are a great blessing to him. So Lord, we pray that you would be with us now as we look at your word, speak to us, we pray, give us ears to hear, hearts to understand.

[ 22 : 06 ] Can we pray all this in Jesus' name? Amen. Well, before we turn and look at God's word, we're going to sing once more Psalm 51. It's a Psalm of confession. So as we've been thinking this service and that Christ has died at a substitute for sinners, so this psalm reminds us our need for that substitute. So let's stand and sing, confessing our sins to God, remembering our need for Jesus. Let's stand and sing.

You only I offended and uneven in your sight. So your words are edified and your verdict justified. Please, may they securify me. I'll be whiter than the snow. Let the bones you crush be joyful. May I joy and gladness know from my failure.

I'll survive your face. Lord, I'd all my wickedness. Lord, create a new heart in me and And us decked as mine free in you.

Do not take your spirit from me, Has been not away from you.

Give me back the joy that I had, Give my willing spirit life.

[ 25 : 18 ] All right. Well, if you'll all turn with me to John chapter 1, verses 19 to 34, it's also going to come up on the screen. Last week we began a series in the Gospel of John, and we're continuing now in that.

So John chapter 1, verses 19 to 34. And this is the testimony of John.

When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who are you? He confessed and did not deny, but confessed, I'm not the Christ. And they asked him, what then?

Are you Elijah? He said, I'm not. Are you the prophet? And he answered, no. So they said to him, who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us.

What do you say about yourself? He said, I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.

[ 26 : 16 ] Now they have been sent for the Pharisees. They asked him, then why are you baptising if you are neither the Christ nor Elijah nor the prophet? John answered them, I baptise with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I'm not worthy to untie.

These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptising. The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and said, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This is he of whom I said, after me comes a man who ranks before me because he was before me. I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptising with water that he might be revealed to Israel.

And John bore witness, I saw the spirit descend from heaven like a dove and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptise with water said to me, he on whom you see the spirit descend and remain.

This is he who baptises with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God. Have you ever met someone who seems to just be obsessed with a certain topic?

[ 27 : 31 ] Maybe they're always talking about the same thing. Maybe it's their gap year or a holiday they went on or a TV show they really like or a hobby. And they have this amazing ability to just fit it into any conversation.

So you're in the middle of talking about one thing and they're saying, oh, you know, that reminds me of my time in Kenya or something like that. People actually used to tease me about doing that to do with Nepal.

I was born there, so I think, and I lived there for 12 years, so I think I have an excuse, but they would say that, you know, at any conversation, I would mention Nepal and they would say, oh, were you born in Nepal?

And they just thought, yeah, I mean, I often said, yes, haven't I told you? But yeah, so I was accused of being that guy who always talks about one thing. So I'm not going to mention Nepal.

This morning we're going to meet a guy who was always talking about the same thing.

And his name was John. We mustn't confuse him with John the apostle who wrote the Gospel. This is John the Baptist. He's like a song being played on repeat.

[ 28 : 30 ] He'll appear again and again throughout John's Gospel. And his mission and his message is all about Jesus. And John includes him a number of times because he's one of John's key eyewitnesses to who Jesus is.

So like I was saying to the kids, he's one of the key court witnesses that says, this is Jesus. I can verify him. I can tell you who he is. If you remember that John's, one of John's aims is that we will believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

So he's lining up the witnesses to prove that to us. John is one of those primary witnesses. And as I said to the kids, we can't hear that witness in person, but John the apostle records his witness so that we still have no excuse and to still encourage us to give us reason to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, whether that's believing for the first time or being strengthened in our belief.

So we just got two simple points this morning. First that John the Baptist, his mission, look at Jesus. And second, John the Baptist, his message, Jesus is God's promised Messiah.

So first, John the Baptist, his mission, look at Jesus. And we see that John the Baptist is all about Jesus just from the way he's introduced. I don't know how you answer someone when they ask you who you are.

[ 29 : 46 ] I'll say something like, my name is Phil. I was born in Nepal and I've lived there for 12 years. I don't mention it much, honestly. But you wouldn't say, I'm not Ian. I'm not murder.

I'm not Angus. I don't know. You don't define who you are by telling someone who you're not. And yet John is all about who he's not, isn't he?

If you look at verse 19, you have a delegation from the priests and Levites has arrived to just ask the question that's on everyone's mind. Could John the Baptist be the Christ?

You see, 1st century Palestine was full of all this anticipation for the Christ or the Messiah. The Messiah was the title given to God's anointed ruler or king who was promised in the Old Testament, who was foretold.

Who's the one who's going to come to rescue God's people and really bring them into all of God's promises that he had made, promises of rest, promises of a new land, all these things.

[ 30 : 47 ] So when thousands of people started coming to John to be baptized, you can understand that expectation arose. People started thinking, could this be the Christ? But John is clear from the very start, isn't he?

He says, I'm not the Christ. In fact, he wants to distance himself as much as possible from being any kind of somebody. The prophet Malachi prophesied that Elijah would return before the Messiah.

And John, we're told in the other gospels, came in the spirit and power of Elijah. But again, he says, I'm not literally Elijah here. I'm not a somebody. Likewise, Moses foretold that a prophet would come and foretold that a greater prophet would come after him, one who'd bring a similar rescue, like Moses rescuing people from Egypt.

And John says, I'm not that prophet. I'm not the rescuer. John doesn't draw attention to himself. He's all about pointing away from the self. He even told that in verse 31, later down the passage, John says, the whole reason I'm baptizing isn't to get a following from myself.

It's to reveal the one who is coming after me. So John isn't drawing attention to himself, but that doesn't mean that his arrival shouldn't be exciting.

[ 32 : 03 ] John's arrival means that the show is about to begin. You can think about it that way. It's like that moment in a wedding where everyone's chattering away, and then you see the minister go to the back of the church, and then you see the mother of the bride walk down and sit at the front.

And everyone comes into a hush silence and a few whispers. Why? Well, not because the mother of the bride is that important. She's not the star of the show, but because the fact that she's arrived and kind of going to sit at the front tells you that the bride is at the door.

Everything's about to kick off. And in the same way, John's arrival is exciting because it means the Messiah is at the door. So when they come to him, that's why John says in verse 23, he defines himself again by who's coming after him.

Verse 23 says, I'm the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.

John is quoting Isaiah 40. You would have recognized it from what? And Alistair read for us earlier. And it's the beginning of a section of Isaiah that is all about, it's all full of promises and what will happen when God rescues his people from exile.

[ 33 : 13 ] So if you read Isaiah 40 to 66, it just, yeah, it starts with comfort you my people. Or why? Because God is going to rescue you and God is going to bring about this new creation.

He's going to settle you in the land and all of the wrongs are going to be righted. Now most of us aren't as saturated in Isaiah's prophecies as much as Israel would have been.

So we probably don't have that same wow moment when John says these words. So I just thought I'd fill in the blanks a bit by giving us just a few verses from Isaiah that would have probably popped into the Israelites head when they read about, when they heard John's words.

So for example, there's forgiveness that is promised in Isaiah 40 that we read. God says, comfort, comfort my people. Why? Because her iniquity is going to be pardoned.

There's relationship and rescue. God says, I'm the Lord. I called you in righteousness. I'll take you by the hand and keep you. What a wonderful promise for the one who's been thrust away from God.

[ 34 : 15 ] He promises to open the eyes of the blind to bring prisoners out of darkness. He promises a new heavens and a new earth. Next slide please. Behold, I create a new heavens and a new earth so the former things shall not be remembered, nor shall be heard in it a sound of weeping or the cry of distress.

Finally, he promises peace. I'll extend peace like a river. That's peace between God and man and peace. No more enemies. Peace for God's people.

Just let those verses wash over you. Let those concepts wash over you. It's peace, forgiveness, restored relationship. All things made new. No more weeping, no more crying.

All things made again. Forgiveness as they belong. That's what Israel had been looking forward to for over 500 years.

And Isaiah had said that it's going to come through God's servant, through the Messiah. And so now John the Baptist enters and he says, he's here.

[ 35 : 14 ] He's at the door. The Messiah is at the door. And John even adds to that, he's far greater than you can imagine. He says, I baptise with water, but among you stands one you do not know.

Even he who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I'm not worthy to untie. Taking off people's shoes was the job of the lowliest servant. And John says, I'm not even at that level. The Messiah who's coming is so majestic that I wouldn't even get into an interview for that kind of John. That's why John insists, don't look at me.

Look at him. That's John's aim. That's why John's witness is included. So that we'll look away from John and we'll look to Jesus. What does it mean though for Jesus to be the Messiah?

That's our second point. This is, I guess, this is a bit longer than our first point. John's message, Jesus is the Messiah. Well from the moment Jesus appears on the scene in verse 29, John the Baptist just starts talking nonstop about who Jesus is.

[ 36 : 15 ] Did you notice? Every single line in those next verses, 29 to 34, is all about Jesus. You read these verses, you can just imagine him jumping up and down in excitement as he tells people and tries to describe to them who Jesus is.

This is the Messiah you've been waiting for. And you could group all of the statements that John makes about Jesus into two groups. And the first is that Jesus is the spirit-filled king who rescues. When John describes what it means for Jesus to be the Messiah, it's clear that he's some kind of king or ruler. And working in reverse, actually, if you look at verse 34, John tells us, he says, I've seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God.

And the Son of God is one of the main titles Jesus will use throughout the whole of John's Gospel that speaks of his divinity and his kingship and his close relationship with God the Father.

And it links back to one of the most important Psalms, Psalm 2, where God says, I'm going to place my own king on the throne. He says, I'm going to put my anointed king on the throne.

[ 37 : 22 ] And it's the Son who's going to rule over all nations. So John knows that, and John knows that Jesus is that king. Why?

Because he sees what happens to Jesus at the baptism. Let's look at those verses. So speaking of Jesus' baptism, John says in verse 32, I saw the spirit descend from heaven like a dove and remain on him.

And do you notice that twice, he repeats that descending and remaining? So we've got that in verse, where is it? Verse 32. And again, we have that at the end of verse 33. This is clearly important to understanding who Jesus is.

And if you remember, John's got Isaiah in his head. He sees himself as the beginning of Isaiah's prophecies, the voice that cries out in the wilderness. And so as he, Jesus walks on the scene, he's seeing Isaiah unfold in front of him.

And the spirit descending on Jesus is an allusion to several passages, key passages in Isaiah that speak of the Messiah as God's spirit-filled king, God's anointed servant.

[ 38 : 25 ] One of those is Isaiah 11, verses 1 to 3. You can flick back to that in your Bibles. I've also stuck it on the screen. I hope it's big enough. Let me just read a few of those key verses.

So God promises, there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from the roots shall bear fruit, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide disputes by what his ears hear. And to promise that a king will come in the line of David. So in other words, he's genuine royalty.

He's the king after God's own heart. We see that Isaiah labors that he's going to be filled in every way by God's spirit. This is God's spirit-filled king, and we're told how he will rule in justice.

And John is bearing witness. He's bearing witness like a witness testifying in the courtroom. He says, I saw the spirit descend on Jesus. That is evidence that he is the Son of God.

[ 39 : 28 ] That is evidence that Jesus is the spirit-filled king who we've been looking forward to that God has promised. Twice he mentions that. Twice he emphasizes that. And do you notice how he emphasizes as well that the spirit remains on Jesus?

We might think that's a really odd thing to mention. You know, why the spirit remains on Jesus? And that's because in the Old Testament, the spirit was given to certain individuals. You might think back to Samson.

We hear the spirit rushed on Samson. He does something like tear a lion in half and go and kill a bunch of Philistines or push some pillars over and rescue God's people.

The spirit also came on Saul, empowered him to lead God's people. And we even sang in Psalm 51 how David says, do not take your spirit from me. That's because in the Old Testament, the spirit only came on people temporarily.

It was never given in full because these people were still, you might say they were still imperfect. God couldn't, the spirit couldn't dwell in them forever.

[ 40 : 31 ] They were just briefly empowered. But to Jesus, God gives his spirit permanently without limit. And that signals that Jesus is the real deal.

He's God's forever king. The one whose spirit is never going to leave like it left Saul because he messed up. And furthermore, because Jesus is filled with the spirit without measure, he's able to give the spirit.

And that's important because it tells us what kind of rescue Jesus has come to bring. Not a rescue from physical exile, but a spiritual rescue.

And the promise that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit is an illusion this time back to Ezekiel. You can see John is just chock full of Old Testament. So Ezekiel chapter 36 and 37 where God says, God speaks to his people in exile and he promises that he'll replace their hearts with stone. That's speaking of their disobedience and their rebellion with hearts of flesh and put his spirit in them. And if we think, okay, what's the big deal about that? He then gives Ezekiel this, that famous vision about Valley of Dry Bones where he tells Ezekiel to speak to the bones and the breath, he breathes the breath of God into those bones and they come to life.

[ 41 : 45 ] So what's the big deal about God giving his spirit? Well, it's the power to bring people from death to life, spiritually dead to spiritually alive to restore relationship with God.

That prophecy never came true in Ezekiel's day. But when Jesus comes full of the spirit, John says the spirit giver has come.

The King has come who can bring back the dead, who can give them life, who can restore relationship between God and man. But the question remains, how will he do that?

How will he do that? And that takes us to verse 29 which really is the heart of this passage. That Jesus is the Lamb who dies.

Next day John saw Jesus coming towards him verse 29 and said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. When John first sees Jesus, he tells us straight away why the reason that Jesus is here, to take away the sin of the world.

[ 42 : 49 ] That's the central reason for the incarnation. The eternal God didn't take on flesh to heal sick people or to drive out demons or to set a good example or to teach profound lessons.

He did all of those things and much more. God wouldn't have taken on humanity just for that. What required the eternal word to become man was the problem of sin.

Ever since the fall of humanity, as you know, has been marked by sin. We break God's commands in what we do and what we say and what we think. Most of all we reject God as Lord of our lives. God doesn't command us to leave a little space for him. God commands us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. You'll know as much as me how easy it is to just section God off to Sundays or a time that's convenient to us.

We might not think it's a big deal, but the Bible tells us the wages of sin is death. Death physically, but also spiritual death. That separation from God both now and for eternity.

[ 43 : 52 ] We may not feel the full effects of it now, but we will. The big question really that has been facing humanity ever since the fall is how can a sinful humanity who sentenced to death approach, let alone have a relationship with a holy God?

Let's look at the options. Option one, someone might say, I've talked to people who say this, well, can't God just ignore sin? Can't God just forgive sin?

He's God, right? You can do that. But if he did that, God wouldn't be just. And God's justice is a really important thing. God wouldn't be God if he wasn't just.

And actually, we care about justice. When murderers get away with their crimes and live to a ripe old age, it's a precious truth that we have a God who will not leave the guilty unpunished.

When we see atrocities in the world and there's nothing that we can do to stop it, it's a precious truth that God is just. We rightly hate seeing miscarriages of justice.

[ 44 : 52 ] And deep down, we know the guilty must be punished. We just struggle when that includes us. We struggle to admit that ourselves. So God can't just ignore sin.

Option two, maybe we can just not sin. Or maybe we can do enough good to outweigh the bad. That's what lots of people say as well. While not sinning is impossible. If you haven't realized that, just try it for one day. Not a single wrong thought or action. More than that, it's impossible to love God with all that we are, even for just 10 minutes as He commands. And good outweighing the bad, that's not just either. Again, a convicted murderer isn't allowed to walk free just because they worked as a paramedic and saved thousands of lives. God can't ignore sin. We can't deal with our sin. In order for us not to pay the punishment ourselves, there's only one other option. And that's for someone to take our place.

[ 45 : 51 ] And God's been showing that, that that's the only option all the way through the Old Testament. You know, why do we get these sacrifices in the Old Testament? You know, why do you have the whole event in Genesis with Abraham and his son Isaac and the lamb takes the place of Isaac?

Why is there the Passover in Egypt? Or the guilt offering presented at the temple or the day of Atonement? All of these things are pointing to the fact that for people to live and not pay the punishment for their own sins, there needs to be something to die in their place.

There needs to be a lamb that will die in their place. Now, of course, we know that just a lamb, a sheep, a goat, isn't an appropriate substitute for a person.

Rather, that's why the whole system pointed forward to the need for a perfect substitute, the final sacrifice for sin.

So when John the Baptist sees Jesus, that's what he's saying. He's saying, he's come. Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The lamb, all this has been pointing towards, has come.

[ 46 : 57 ] John's probably got all of those lamb references from across the Old Testament in his head, but I think the big one he's got in his head is Isaiah 53. John has been, the Baptist has been quoting from Isaiah.

He's been making, seeing references in who Jesus is. Now he's looking at Jesus through that lens. And Isaiah 53 is, in Isaiah 53, God promises that he'll send his servant who will die like a lamb as a substitute for sin.

And we won't read the whole thing. The poem is written as in a chiastic structure. That means it goes A, B, C, D, C, B, A, which focuses our attention to the middle. So I'm just going to read the middle few verses of Isaiah 53.

And you listen along and listen out for the language of substitution. Okay? Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, with his stripes we are healed.

[ 48 : 05 ] Or we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone 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 in his mouth, like a lamb led to the slaughter like a sheep before it shearers his silence, so he did not open his mouth.

The suffering servant in Isaiah dies like a lamb as a substitute for sinful people. He takes their sins, their iniquities, their transgressions. He's punished for them all.

He's wounded, crushed, led to the slaughter. And what happens? He returns, he gives peace, he gives healing. Isaiah is promising the ultimate substitution for sin.

And so when John sees Jesus, he says, that's him. Behold the Lamb of God, behold the suffering servant who will die as a lamb. And that really joins up everything that John says when he sees Jesus.

How does the spirit-filled king rescue his people? Or by becoming the lamb who suffers and dies?

[ 49 : 13 ] How can sinful humanity be restored into relationship with God, by God himself becoming flesh and dying in the place of sinners? The shadow of the cross extends all the way back from chapter 20 and John, or chapter 19, all the way to these first pages.

Because from the start, John wants us to know not just who Jesus is, but why he came. And that the only reason God had to become man was because there's no other way to provide an appropriate substitute for sinners like you and me.

God cannot ignore sin. We cannot save ourselves. And so in his love God sent Jesus to become a man, to live approximately 33 years on earth, all in order that he might die.

He was born to die. Jesus is the lamb of God because he's the God, the lamb that God provides. We can't provide it ourselves.

And he's an effective substitute. He could take away the sin of the world. That doesn't mean every single person in the world. That means anyone and everyone who believes in him.

[ 50 : 20 ] There's no one too sinful that he can't stand in their place. There's no one too good enough that they don't need him to stand in their place. And that our substitution isn't automatic as we read on in John's Gospel we see we have to accept that offer.

We have to believe that Jesus' death in our place really can take away our sin and ask him to take our place. John will talk about that as he explains what it means to believe.

That's the good news of the Gospel. That's the wonderful comfort. But for now John just wants us to look at Jesus. John wants us to see that the substitute has come and if we haven't noticed that some of us might not ever realize that for the first time that Jesus is the substitute we need.

Others of us might feel the weight of our sin and we forget that actually we don't have to bear that weight ourselves. We also need to look at Jesus and remember that he is our substitute. If we've trusted in him he does stand in our place.

He has borne our guilt. He has borne the punishment for us. Our sin is serious and that punishment is death.

[ 51 : 30 ] But God is loving and He sent Christ to die in our place. So praise God the Father that He's provided the sacrifice. Praise Christ Jesus who willingly gave Himself as a substitute for sinners.

Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father we thank you that you haven't left yourself without witness and we pray that as we read your word, as we hear John's witness about Jesus that we would believe, we would look to Jesus, we would recognize that he is the Lamb, that he is the King and that we can have a relationship with him when he stands in our place to take away our sin.

May we believe that and we keep believing that. May that give us comfort and assurance this day and to come. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to close by singing Psalm 116. It's a Psalm that rejoices really in God's rescue. We can sing this because we're praising God for the rescue that he provides through Jesus on our behalf.

[ 52 : 42 ] So let's stand and sing Psalm 116 verses 1 to 9 as the door leads us. Let us sing Psalm 116 verses 1 to 9 as the door leads us.

On the empty and wage of the grave With leaf and trouble I was overcome And on the name of God I call Lord St. The Lord our God is kind and full of grace O Christ, your Son, compassionate is he The Lord protects all those of childlike faith

When I was in great need he rescued me Rest O my soul, Lord has been good to you For you, O Lord, have saved my soul from death My feet from sound play and my eyes from tears That I may live for you while I have breathed Final verse as we close.

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you for everything good that you may give his will, working in us, that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

Thank you.