

Sharing Jesus Fully

John 5:31-47

Key Verse: 5:39-40

“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

We're halfway through our special series on sharing Jesus. We've learned that it is really important to share Jesus with other people. It should really be the natural reaction to the love that was poured out upon us through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. We've learned that our own sinful nature and limitations prevent us from being able to spread the gospel message effectively. On our own, we lack the power to share and need help from the Holy Spirit to do so. And last week, we learned that devoted prayer is essential to have Holy Spirit to come in us and give us the words to clearly share the mystery of Christ and the door may be opened for us to share the message. That's a lot of heavy information to have and we can really be stoked to want to share Christ with other people, but the question remains, "What do we share?" We can share our personal experiences about what Jesus has done for us and we should, but those are subjective. We have a wealth of knowledge right in front of us right now. It's in your hands. It's the Bible. The Bible is the story of God...the story of God creating the world, man falling into sin, and how God redeemed his creation. The Bible is the story of Jesus and what he did for each and every one of us. Don't take my word for it. Jesus says so, himself, in the very passage that we just read. To fully share Jesus with others we should have a full understanding of who he is from the whole Bible.

Before getting into this particular passage, we need to have a little background information. The entire passage is Jesus talking and we show up in the middle of a conversation. Let's go back to the beginning of chapter 5 and see what is going on. At the beginning of the chapter, Jesus heals a man who was paralyzed for thirty-eight years. It's a great miracle. A man who couldn't walk for nearly four decades picked up his mat and walked away. Praise God! Well, not everyone did. You see, the day Jesus performed the healing was the Sabbath, like our Sundays, and the Jews were not supposed to do any work on the Sabbath. The Jewish religious leaders thought that healing on the Sabbath broke their laws and they were not pleased that Jesus broke their rules. They, then, proceeded to persecute Jesus for his actions. Jesus told them that he was doing his Father's work, God's work, and the Jews wanted to kill him all the more. That's how we get to here. Jesus is speaking to those religious leaders, giving them proof of his authority. These religious leaders knew the Bible inside and out, forward and back. They had it memorized, so Jesus appealed to that.

We arrive in this passage with Jesus saying, "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true." (31) Jesus is appealing to the religious leaders based on their understanding. In Jewish law, a person could not be convicted without the testimony of two or three people. One person's testimony alone is not valid. So Jesus brings out these other witnesses. The first is John the Baptist. Now, John was regarded as a prophet from God by most of the people. He had a ministry in the desert and called people to repentance. His mission was to prepare people's hearts for Jesus' coming. When he saw Jesus coming toward him, John said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) Plus, he testified that Jesus was the Son of God (John 1:34). Jesus wanted to use John's testimony to help save those who were trying to kill him. Human testimony is very faulty. We have our agendas and our memories are sketchy at best, but man's testimony is important to other people. When there is trust and respect, there is a credible testimony. The religious leaders knew John and knew that the people regarded him as a prophet. If the leaders accepted that John was a prophet, they would accept his message about Jesus. In the same way, it is important for us to share Jesus

with those who know us best. We might be afraid that people might think that we are weird, but they may also trust us like no other person when we do talk about Jesus.

However, John's testimony and our testimony aren't the binding words about who Jesus is. Jesus continues, "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me." (36) Jesus performed many great acts during his tenure on Earth and each of them also shows Jesus' identity. After John the Baptist was imprisoned, he sent some disciples to Jesus to see if he was the Christ. "Jesus replied, 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.'" (Matthew 11:4-5) Jesus replied back to the disciples by telling of what he has done. The Christ was to perform many miracles and Jesus did them all: his works showed his identity.

Beyond what Jesus had done, there was another who testified about Jesus and that testimony was the most binding of all. God the Father testified about Jesus through the Holy Scripture. "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." (39-40) Jesus calls out the religious leaders. They knew the Scriptures very well. They spent much of their time memorizing and knowing it inside and out. It put them in a position of power. As Jesus said, they think that they have eternal life by knowing them, but Jesus says that the religious leaders missed the point. The Bible is not about gaining eternal life; it's about Jesus. Now, eternal life is in the Bible, but it is not the point of the Bible. In having their own idea about God's word, they failed to really see point of God's word.

This happens very often throughout the world. People have all sorts of motives for wanting to study God's word. There are those who come to the Bible in search of blessing. They think that by studying the Bible, they will find the secret to happiness and wealth. There are others that see the Bible as a book of morals, of how to live the right life. If they follow all the rules of the Bible, then God would like them and they would be saved. Some come to the Bible wanting to please someone. Other people just want to prove some point and justify their lives. If these motives are the sole purpose of cracking open the Bible, then you will miss something gigantic; you miss most of who Jesus is.

Now, if you are someone who doesn't believe, then having some of these motives as starting point is a very good thing, but I ask that you keep your heart open to the possibility of God changing your motive to know Jesus. If you profess yourself a believer, however, but you don't search the Bible for the main point of Jesus, you might think that the Bible doesn't have that much power because the power of the gospel is in the Word and Jesus is the living Word of God. There was a man named Paul, and he knew Jesus pretty well. He even wrote more books of the Bible than anybody else. Late in his life, he wrote, "I want to know Christ." (Philippians 3:10) Paul's desire was not that he would find power or blessing or eternal life, but that he would find Christ. It was his lifelong goal. When you read what Paul wrote, you can see that he had that goal. Each of the letters in the Bible that Paul wrote overflows with references to Jesus.

In light of Paul's letters, it can be easy to see how the New Testament talks about Jesus. There are the four gospels that talk about Jesus' life on earth, the Acts of the Apostles, the letters, the book of Revelation. They are all dripping with Jesus, but the Old Testament is also saturated with Christ. When Jesus said, "These are the very Scriptures that testify about me", (39) he wasn't referring to the New Testament; it wasn't written yet. Instead, Jesus was

referring to the Old Testament. That's a very big revelation. How many people have read at least some of the Old Testament? Isn't it filled with war and wrath and idolatry? That sounds a little different from what we see in the New Testament. You might read a passage or a book of the Old Testament and never see Jesus. A lot of people, when they read the Old Testament, use it for various reasons. Some see the Old Testament as background for the New and others just treat it as a source of prophecies and still others see only morality and the law. A good example can be found in the two books that we just finished as a ministry, 1 and 2 Samuel. These books are clearly from the Old Testament. Look at one famous passage, David and Goliath. You can look at David and marvel about his faith and courage and resolve that we should have the same faith and courage in our lives, but then you miss the point that God used the boy to take down the giant. We should not marvel at the faith of David; we should marvel at how God uses the small things to humble the proud. That's not a stretch of the passage. David said to Goliath, "All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands." (1 Samuel 17:47) David knew that we shouldn't make the situation about him, but about God...about our savior Jesus.

So then, how do we see Christ throughout the Old Testament? How does Jesus show up? Jesus is in the Old Testament through Messianic prophecies, foreshadowed passages, and sometimes Jesus is literally there. A good way to start seeing Christ in the Old Testament and to see Jesus fully is to look to see how the New Testament quotes and refers to the Old Testament, and one of the best ways to do that is look at the book of Hebrews. It begins, "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe." (Hebrews 1:1-2) These opening words show that the Old Testament and the New Testament are not two separate entities, but one book with a clear, continuous message. From there, the writer explains how Jesus is greater than the angels using Psalms, 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles, and Deuteronomy. Then the text talks about how Jesus was predicted to become human, how the establishment of the Sabbath points to Jesus, how Jesus is the great high priest and how he fulfills the Jewish sacrificial system stated in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The author even shows how Melchizedek, who appears in 3 verses in the book of Genesis, points to Jesus. Take a look at Hebrews; it's a good read in seeing Christ in the Old Testament.

Above and beyond what is written in Hebrews, there are over three hundred Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. There are over three hundred places in the Old Testament that directly talk about what the Messiah would do and where he would come from. I'm not going to go through many of those here. We have a list of these prophecies on our website in an April 20, 2010 blog post if you are interested, but there are some prophecies that are pretty famous. "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) This speaks of Jesus' virgin birth (Luke 1:26-38). Also Isaiah speaks of the Messiah's death: "Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:4-5) This is just a small snippet of what is recorded on the Old Testament.

Even more than prophecies are the foreshadows of the Christ that are the bulk of the Old Testament. In the book of Exodus, Jesus is the Passover lamb that removes the wrath of God from our lives. Plus, the exodus from Egypt points to Jesus. When Moses was leading the Israelites out of Egypt to the land of Canaan, Pharaoh was pursuing him. You see the slaves leaving their old lives and getting new ones in the Promised Land. This speaks of our

redemption at Jesus' hands and Satan's continued pursuit of our lives. In the book of Jonah, the prophet Jonah tries to flee from God and his mission, but ends up inside a great fish for three days and three nights. Jesus said, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matthew 12:40) If Jesus didn't make the connection between Jonah and himself, I'm not sure that I would ever have. These types of foreshadowing events are scattered throughout the Old Testament.

On a rare few occasions, you can actually see Jesus walking around in the Old Testament. Genesis 18 is the account of three visitors to Abraham before God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah. Two of these visitors are angels (19:1), messengers of God, but the third visitor is the Lord himself. Genesis 18 calls the third person "Lord", which is only reserved for God. Here, standing before Abraham, in the flesh, is God. This Lord is not a disembodied voice, but a physical form with a face and body. Of the three persons of God, only Jesus has a body. Before Jesus was born to Mary, he was walking the earth with Abraham, talking with him. This is not an isolated incident. When Jacob wrestled with God, he was wrestling with Jesus. Daniel saw Jesus in his glory through a vision in Daniel 7.

Jesus is throughout the whole Bible. He shows up in countless different ways. All we need to do is open our hearts and minds to the possibility that he is there. All we need to do is to seek Jesus and we will find him. Jesus says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8) All we need is the right motive, all we need is the right heart and the whole Bible opens up to us and reveals the mystery of Christ to us. Remember, last week's passage called the gospel message the mystery of Christ. It is a mystery because it is a hidden treasure written throughout the Old Testament. Underneath the narrative of the passages is the foundation of Christ. His story is woven throughout the Bible, all we have to do is ask in prayer and we will see it.

The Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' time were blind to seeing what the Scriptures say about him because they desired only eternal life...they desired glory for themselves. Jesus called them out, "I do not accept glory from human beings, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts." (41-42) And, "How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" (44) The religious leaders were diligently seeking eternal life, but they failed to see the source of it. They loved to be praised by men and missed that salvation and eternal life were only attainable by Christ.

How often does something like this happen to us? Probably more often than we would like to admit. It's part of our sinful nature to try to remove God from the equation. When we were studying 1 and 2 Samuel it was so difficult not to go through the verse-by-verse narrative and find Jesus in the passages. It was so easy to look at David's faith and strength and desire it and focus on that, instead of looking at the object of David's faith and source of his strength. On Fridays, when we shared what we learned about the week's passage, many people said that they have to be like David or Samuel or not like Saul, but failed to mention the common thread among them all, Jesus. You might wonder what's wrong with only getting the morals or the blessing or whatever we are searching for. Honestly, that's a valid question, but think about this, when you are seeking the good life, but refusing to put God in there is something very proud. The morals and law are there to show us what the perfect life is like, but that we are also powerless without God to attain that high standard.

Jesus said, "But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?" (45-47) The religious leaders held that they were followers of Moses, but they didn't see that Moses was pointing to Jesus. Moses was standing there with his hand pointing to Christ, but all the religious leaders could do was to try to mimic the pose that Moses was doing and not look to where he was pointing. We're no different. We look at David and think that he is such a great man of God and yet forget to remember if you take a close look, King David is just as messed up as the rest of us and that it was God who made David anything. The Bible is not about man; it is about God.

I'm a doer. I don't particularly like long discussions. I like to plan and then act. There was a time, when I would try to force myself to act a certain way that I thought was according to the Bible. It made me miserable and burdened. What would happen to me if I were to stop doing any of these tasks? Then, just over two years ago God broke my heart and my life came shattering down. I lost my job and even now still struggle greatly in many respects. During this time, every time I opened the Bible, God showed me that everything is about Jesus. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus is the main point of life. That revelation opened my eyes to his word and removed the burden of performance from my heart and helped me to have stronger faith.

What does this have to do with sharing Jesus? Well, we have to know Jesus to share him. Plus, to know the fullness of the love that Jesus has for us just makes the gospel message even more awe inspiring. Knowing that God's redemptive plan is not a last ditch effort to save his creation, gives us a sense of how great our God is. Knowing that Jesus was there from the very beginning gives power to Jesus' name. All the figures in the Old Testament looked forward to the coming of Christ...all of them. They looked forward to a time where God would dwell with men. They looked forward to a time where the brokenness of humanity would bring about the salvation of the whole world. That hope was so great that they saw Jesus and shared him. The same should hold for us. Our hope should be so great, our desire should be so great that we hunt out Christ and when we find him, and we will find him, we would be so overjoyed at our find that we want to share Jesus with others. Look at two of Jesus' first disciples Andrew and Philip. After spending a short time with Jesus, Andrew went to find his brother Simon and said, "We have found the Messiah." (John 1:41) Philip, after meeting Christ, went to Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:45) Both these men had understanding about who Jesus was based on Scripture and when they realized that, they couldn't help but go share that fact with someone.

How about you? Why are you here? Examine your heart. Are you here to please someone? Are you here to find something: blessing, power or something else? Are you here because you want to prove a point? Or is it something else? Like Paul, do you want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection? This book, the Bible, has very little power when you try to remove Jesus from it, because removing God removes the heart. The power to share the gospel, the power of the gospel is woven throughout its pages from the beginning to the end. Let it fill your heart with God's love for you. Open your hearts and your minds to search the word for Jesus. Do not read the Bible because you think you have to read the Bible each day, read the Bible to know Jesus. Know fully what Jesus has done for you and share fully what Jesus has done for you.