

Theme: Sharing The Story Of Jesus With Others

Object: Starfish

Scripture: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes ...” Romans 1:16 NASB

Look at what I have this morning. A starfish! At one time, this starfish was alive and swimming in the ocean. Sometimes the tides and waves wash starfish up on the beach. When this happens the starfish die, because they cannot live outside the water. People collect the dead starfish and sell them to stores and that is where I got this one.

Have you ever gone to the beach? It is great fun walking on the beach in and out of the waves. Early one morning there was a man walking on the beach, people were still asleep and he was enjoying being alone with the sound of the waves. Then he saw another man walking towards him from some distance away. Every few steps the man would stoop and pick something up and throw it into the ocean. As they got closer to each other the first man could see that the second man was picking up starfish and throwing them back into the ocean.

When the two men met on the beach, the first man said, “Good morning. I was wondering what you are doing?” The second man replied, “Why, I am throwing these starfish back into the ocean, because if I don’t, they will die.” The first man said, **Slide** “I can see that, but there must be thousands of starfish washing up on this long beach and you can’t possibly throw them all back in. Besides there are

hundreds of miles of beach and starfish are washed up on the sand on all the beaches. So, don't you see that it is impossible for you to really make a difference?"

At this the second man bent down and picked up another starfish and threw it back into the ocean. He smiled at the first man and said, **Slide** "I made a difference for that one starfish."

All over the world there are people who are just like those starfish – they are out of the water. They are dying because they do not know Jesus, who is living water for people to live spiritually. There are millions of these spiritually dying people. Can we make a difference? You bet we can! Maybe like the starfish we cannot get them all, but we can make a difference one at a time. We can tell each person we meet each day about Jesus. Each time we tell someone about Jesus we can say, I made a difference for that one – for that person.

Dear Lord, help us to make a difference in the lives of the people we meet everyday by sharing the love and gospel of Jesus. Amen

READING – Romans 1:16-22

John 3:31-36

Slide Believe!

Sermon #20

Open in Prayer **Blank**

In A. W. Tozer's book, *The Pursuit of God*, he refers to what he believes is the inferential faith of the average person. By this he implies that for many people their faith in God is the end result of a chain of reasoning rather than a reality. According to such people there is much to suggest the existence of God. There is the beauty of creation and nature, the vast size and complexity of the universe, the order of atoms and matter. They say, God must be, because of all these things. Other people argue from the traditions of life; my parents believed in God, I was raised in the church; therefore God must be real. I believe because of the traditions of history and other people I know who believe. Others would argue their belief in God is because of the things God stands for - truth, goodness, ethics and the value of life.

Even though each of these chains of reasoning is unique, they do have one thing in common – they DO NOT know God in a personal experience, they do not have a relationship with God. While admitting God's existence they do not think of God as knowable. God is an abstract being and not knowable as the world all around us is knowable for we can touch and see it. This is true of non-Christians, but unfortunately it may be true of some who consider themselves to be "Christians." Although they believe "of" Christ historically and trust Him in one sense, still for them God is unreal and they go through life attempting to love an ideal or be loyal to an abstract doctrine. The Apostle John writes in several places in his gospel account of the difference of those who believe or know "of" Jesus and those who

are truly saved; for they believe “in” Jesus as Lord and Savior. To believe or know “of” Jesus is kind of like being married but living parallel lives that occasionally intersect. This is not a true marriage relationship and does not work well as the divorce rate testifies to. To live as a Christian without a relationship with God through Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not truly Christian. This closing of chapter 3 of the gospel of John deals with this by making clear that Jesus is God and He is the greatest witness to God and He is the Revealer of God to mankind. In this last recorded dialog of John the Baptist he lists five reasons for his disciples and for us today to **Slide** believe “in” the absolute supremacy of Jesus Christ as God.

Slide The first of the five is; **Jesus is the perfect witness.** Let me ask you what makes a person a creditable witness? We can find a least some of the answer when we look to our court system. To be a witness in court you must have firsthand knowledge. The witness must have seen and or heard to that which he is testifying. No judge will allow hearsay testimony as evidence. A good witness must be willing to testify, to get involved. A creditable witness is creditable because of their history and the testimony of their lives. It is these three elements that makes one a good witness. Then, by these standards Jesus is a creditable and perfect witness. **Blank**

Beginning in verse 31, John the Baptist, who had also been proven to be a creditable and reliable witness, testifies, “**He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.**” John is saying Jesus can be trusted because He comes from heaven and comes from God the Father. Jesus has firsthand knowledge of what He is talking about. The verb in this verse translated as, “**from above**” is the

same word translated as “born again” found in verses 3 and 7 recording the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. In these earlier verses it reflects the heavenly origin of the new spiritual birth or to be “born again” and here in verse 31 it refers to the origin of Christ as the One “who comes from heaven.” This then means Christ is above ALL. He is sovereign over all creation and the universe in general and the world of mankind in specific. In contrast John the Baptist declares that he is “of the earth” and is one who “speaks of the earth.” John is saying he is human and limited and that Jesus is God and unlimited. Jesus’ testimony is greater and far superior to his. Verse 32 gives us the next element of being a reliable witness, we read, “What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.” **Slide** The second reason to believe is - **Jesus is a firsthand witness of the truth.** Just as a reliable witness in court is willing to testify, so too Jesus is willing to be involved and testify and He testifies of what He personally has knowledge of. In the old covenant God **Slide** “spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways.” (John the Baptist is the last of the old covenant prophets) **Slide** However, “in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.” (Hebrews 1:1-2 NASB) Jesus’ teaching and testimony is superior to anyone for His knowledge is firsthand and everyone else’s is secondhand. It is interesting that the Apostle John uses the verb “testifies” in the present tense in verse 32. In fact John speaks in the present tense whenever He writes of Christ and His witness. Let me ask you my brothers and sisters is your witness of Jesus in the present tense? People tend to use the past tense, for they think of Jesus in this way; He came, bore His testimony and then returned to heaven. **Blank** A Gallup poll showed that out of all evangelical, American believers, only two percent had introduced another person to Christ. I believe this is, at least partly, true because

most Christians think of Jesus in the past tense. May this not be so with us! Let us be active in witnessing to others of Jesus, as Jesus Himself modeled for us in the New Testament. Christ met unbelievers where they were. Many Christians today still don't seem to understand this; that cultivators have to get out in the field. According to one count, the gospels records 132 contacts that Jesus had with people. Six were in the Temple, four in the synagogues and 122 were out with the people in the mainstream of life. Jesus was in the fields of the unsaved; He planted and tenderly cultivated and is harvesting. Jesus is still testifying today. Where is Jesus testifying, you might ask? The answer is in the Bible. Is the Bible something that is dead, irrelevant, or dated? The world would say it is. But, we, you and I, know that the Bible is living and Christ is living and it is through the Bible that Jesus continues to speak and bear witness to heavenly things in our fallen world, in our time. The question is, are we, you and I, being obedient to Christ and sharing the gospel of Christ with the lost? This is the model that Jesus gave us. Witnessing is a matter of obedience.

Sadly, John the Baptist reveals that despite Jesus' power and authoritative testimony of truth and of God, **"no one receives His testimony"** as we read in verse 32. Here John echoed the very words of Jesus to Nicodemus in verse 11, **Slide** **"Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony."** John is stressing that the world in general rejects Jesus and His teaching. Apostle John emphasizes this very attitude in the opening of his gospel, **Slide** **"There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him."** (John 1:9-10 NASB) The Apostle Paul said it this way, **Slide** the **"natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because**

they are spiritually appraised.” (1 Corinthians 2:14 NASB) The Jewish leaders relied on secondhand information through limited prophets instead of seeking Jesus with His firsthand spiritual truth. They rejected truth for traditions of their fathers. Simply put – for those back in John’s time and for people today - most reject the truth of Jesus because unsaved people are spiritually dead and dead people cannot do anything to help themselves. **Blank**

The third element of a good witness is they are creditable, we see **Slide** **Jesus is creditable** in verse 34, “For He whom God has sent **speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.**” Jesus possesses the Spirit of God without measure or limit and therefore, is creditable. Jesus speaks the very **words of God** and therefore, Jesus is the most creditable witness, ever! The prophets in the Old Testament were empowered and lead by the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist himself was **Slide** “filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb.” (Luke 1:15 NASB) Yet, for John and the other prophets their empowerment was limited by their sin nature. Jesus on the other hand had no such limits for He was sinless and He was one with the Spirit as He is one with the Father. **Blank** Jesus spoke **the words of God** with direct knowledge of God.

As we saw in verse 32, that in general the world rejected the testimony of Jesus. However, there were – “Praise be to God” – exceptions. Verse 33 states, “He who has received His testimony has set his seal to *this*, that God is true.” There are those who do accept the testimony of Christ. Some may believe “of” Christ as we talked earlier, but they do NOT believe “in” Christ and this is the difference between eternal life for those spoken of in verse 33 and damnation. Setting one’s seal meant to certify or guarantee something – and here it is to certify or guarantee **that God is true**. They are not testifying that Jesus is a prophet, but that

Jesus is God very God. The prophets had some of the truth as God revealed it, but Jesus possessed ALL the truth.

I like what Dr. John White; a Christian author, psychiatrist and pastor wrote in his book *The Fight*, “A good witness isn’t like a salesman, because the emphasis is on a person rather than a product. **Slide** A good witness is like a signpost. It doesn't matter whether it is old, young, pretty, ugly; it has to point the right direction and be able to be understood. We are witnesses to Christ; we point to him.” We are to be signposts pointing to Jesus, even though life may tatter us and wear upon us - we are to point in the right direction and make Jesus understood. **Slide** Fourthly, **Jesus points to God, through the Bible** and this is the right direction to salvation. The problem is many are not signposts pointing to Jesus, because they are no longer studying the scriptures, they are letting the world influence them spiritually and letting society dictate what the standards are. Yet the standards of society have done nothing but lead people into destruction, pain and suffering. The only hope for this dying world is Jesus and I mean the Jesus of the Bible, not some false Jesus. There are many who teach a Jesus that is false and not of the Bible and these fake Jesus’ give people false hope and security and in the end give people eternal damnation. We are to be signposts of the one true Jesus of the Bible. Howard Hendricks a great Christian theologian and longtime professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and who recently died in February of this year said it this way, **Slide** “In the midst of a generation screaming for answers, Christians are **stuttering.**” My brothers and sisters we cannot stutter, we must have the answers of spiritual life and hope and we must seek out the lost and share the hope that points them to Jesus. **Blank**

The fifth and last point of our study states what the first four imply and that is:

because of God the Father's love for His Son, Jesus - God the Father has given **Slide** **Jesus complete authority** over all things on earth and in heaven. Verses 35 and 36 say, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." John the Baptist's affirmation of Jesus' absolute authority demonstrated his humble attitude and John knew who he was, what God had called him to do and he possessed peace in knowing who Jesus was, even peace to his death. As John readies to fade from prominence he gives an invitation and a warning that is a fitting climax to this chapter and for his ministry. John gives people **Slide** **two choices**. Like Moses gave two choices, **Slide** "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God..." (Deuteronomy 11:26-28 NASB) Like Joshua gave two choices, **Slide** "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve ... as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15 NASB) Like Elijah who gave the people two choices, **Slide** "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." (1 Kings 18:21 NASB) Like Jesus who a few verses earlier said their but two choices, **Slide** "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:18 NASB) John the Baptist is also setting before the people two choices, the clear choice to surrender and gain salvation or the choice of retaining their own determination and damnation. **Blank** The simple and blessed truth of salvation is found in verse 35 of our study passage "He who believes in the Son has eternal life." The structure of this verse and many verses in the Bible places this

statement in the present tense, it is a present possession, not just a future hope of being with Jesus in heaven, but it is ours today and every day. Please, my beloved, understand this as found in 1 John, **Slide** "... that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." (1 John 5:11-12 NASB) When one surrenders their life to Christ and receives the gift of salvation - their eternal spiritual life with God begins – it is the beginning of eternity in fellowship with God the Creator.

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On the other hand the prophets, John the Baptist, the apostles, and Jesus are also clear in what they taught - look at what is written in verse 36, "he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." If one chooses to not surrender their life to Jesus then they are under the wrath and judgment of God and that too is in the present – it is true here on earth and will be true for eternity in hell. For those who die unbelieving and are for eternity in hell they will know at that time Jesus is God and they rejected their only hope and are condemned forever. The same Apostle John who wrote this gospel account also wrote the last book of the Bible that closed The Revelation of Jesus Christ, in chapter twenty we read these sobering words from God, **Slide** "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their

deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of *them* according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:10-15 NASB) I tremble reading this passage, but if I had not then I would have only given half of the truth. The first half, **Slide** "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NASB) What wonderful words these are to those of us who have surrendered our lives to Jesus as our Lord and Savior, these are our words - they are our blessing. But there is the second truth and it affects the majority of the world, sadly it is true for those who are dear to us and we love, as well as for the world at large and the truth is this, **Slide** "... if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:15 NASB) My brothers and sisters do not these two truths spur you into action? Do not these two truths give you the determination and courage to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with those who are lost and will experience the second eternal death? Can you not suffer some rejection for the sake of their souls? This is the point of John the Baptist's words both for his day and for us today. Act – act, for Jesus has called us to be His ambassadors – will you be obedient? The Lord's instructions are simple – Act and act today – share gospel of the salvation of Christ

In closing I would like to share with you what I was taught early as a Christian and I still hold these simply instructions, this gospel close to my heart. Let me share with you the Roman Road to Salvation.

From - The Letter of Paul to the Romans

Slide 3:23 “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Slide 6:23 “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Slide 5:8 “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Slide 10:13 “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”

Slide 10:9-10 “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

And I have added these two verses because I believe they complete this simple and straightforward salvation message. They are -

Slide 1 John 5:11-12 “The testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Slide Revelation 3:20 “Behold, I (Jesus) stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”

My beloved, who can you share this simple but eternally important truth with this week? Who do you know that needs to hear the simple saving gospel of Jesus?

Let me close in prayer.