

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 31st January 2010
‘The Turning Point of John’s Gospel’
John ch.11:38-57

Introduction

We have been looking at the “seven I am” sayings in John’s Gospel recently. So far we have made our way through the first five of them:

Jesus said,

“I am the Bread of Life.”	John 6:35
“I am the Light of the World”	John 8:12, 9:5
“I am the Gate for the sheep”	John 10:7,9
“I am the Good Shepherd”	John 10:11,14
“I am the Resurrection and the Life”	John 11:25

We will look at two more later on in this Gospel:

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”	John 14:6
“I am the Vine, you are the branches”	John 15:5

All of them are claims Jesus made about himself - He was claiming to be God. The second line of each saying tells us how we can be saved and get right with God - only through trusting in Jesus by faith. He is **the only** way to God.

For example:

- John 6:35 (Bread) – *‘He who **comes to me** will never go hungry, and he who **believes in me** will never be thirsty.’*
John 8:12 (Light) – *‘Whoever **follows me** will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’*
John 10:9 (Gate) – *‘Whoever **enters through me** will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture.’*
John 10:11 (Shepherd) – *‘The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.’ (v.14) ‘I know my sheep and my sheep **know me**.’*
John 11:25 (Resurrection) – *‘He who **believes in me** will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.’*

So Jesus is inviting us to:

Come to Him, Believe in Him, Follow Him, Enter through Him, Know Him, Believe in Him or Trust in Him – if we want to be saved and get right with God. It couldn’t be clearer - what we have to do if we want to be saved.

But tonight we come to the second half of John ch.11. This is an important passage of Scripture, because it is actually the turning point of John’s Gospel.

- Jesus has been teaching, doing miracles and calling people to follow him.
- The raising of Lazarus from the dead was in fact his last recorded miracle.
- In Ch.12 he will enter Jerusalem for the last time.
- In Chs.13-17 he will teach his own disciples privately in the Upper Room.
- In Chs.18-19 he will be falsely accused, arrested, judged and crucified.

- But in Chs.20-21 he will rise from the dead, and be seen alive by many.
- So John Ch.11, in a sense, is the end of Jesus’ Public Ministry on earth.
- It’s in Ch.11 that the Jewish authorities take the decision to kill Jesus (v.53).
They decide to get rid of Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God!

In Ch.11 we have had news of Lazarus’ death brought to Jesus (v.1-16) Jesus comes to Bethany in time to comfort Mary and Martha (v.17-37) Jesus then performs a miracle raising Lazarus back to life again (v.38-44) And then in the rest of the chapter we get the reaction to this miracle (v.45-57). The crowd is strangely divided - some believe in him as their Saviour (v.45) Others want to *put him to death because he was able to raise the dead!* (v.50) How absurd! It just shows how twisted human minds can become. What is the point of wanting someone dead, if they have the power to raise the dead, if they have the power over death itself?

So here in John ch.11, just as we have seen throughout John’s Gospel, there is a very definite division – there are two groups: accepters and rejecters. This has been the case from the very first chapter of John’s Gospel. In John 1:11-12 there were 2 groups - accepters & rejecters - likewise here.

It is still the same today. Either you have accepted Jesus or you are still rejecting him. Have you accepted Jesus as your Saviour and Lord? If you haven’t accepted him, then you are still rejecting him completely. Maybe tonight you will change your mind, and accept Jesus as your Saviour?

Let’s take a closer look and see what was going on in this chapter:-

1. The purpose of the miracle was to bring people to faith in Jesus.

In vs.21-27 Jesus wanted Martha to put her faith in Him. Jesus wanted Martha to believe in him as the One who is the Resurrection and the Life. As the only one who has power of over life and death.

And she did. In v.27 Martha responded to Jesus by saying:

‘Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.’

That was Martha’s very clear statement of faith. That was the moment she believed in Jesus for herself, as her Saviour and Lord. To her, he was the Messiah – the One who had been promised throughout the Old Testament, the One who was to come into the world. He had come. But he was more than just the Messiah to her – He was the Son of God. That’s what she confesses here. On the basis of the miracles Martha could see that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, and that God was working

through Him to perform all of these wonderful miracles. He and the Father were One. So she had no problem calling him, her Lord.

That's what we must believe and confess in order to be true Christians today: That Jesus is the **Messiah**, promised throughout the Old Testament. That Jesus is the **Son of God**, proven to us by the miracles he performed. That Jesus is our **Lord**, as we humbly and gladly submit our lives to Him.

But not only did Jesus want Martha to believe in Him...

In vs.41-42 Jesus wanted the People looking on to put their faith in him too: He wanted them to believe in Him on the basis of the evidence of this miracle, that he was all he claimed to be: that He, Jesus, was the Son of God, the Messiah, and that He was the Saviour who had come into the world from God.

Again in v.45 that is exactly what happened - Some of the people did put their faith in him as their Lord and Saviour when they saw he had power to give life.

But why didn't they **all** believe? Why did some believe, and some didn't? They all saw the same miracle - they all saw the same evidence.

Turn with me to Luke 16:19-31 for a moment. Notice vs.29-31 there:

It's not miracles that convince - It's God's Word that we need to listen to!

'They will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'

Sadly, that is absolutely true. Just take those who are recorded in Scripture:

- Elijah raised the Widow of Zarephath's son back to life. (1 Kings 17)
- Elisha restored the Shunamite's son to life again (2 Kings 4)
- Jairus' daughter was raised from the dead.
- The Widow of Nain's son was raised from the dead.
- Lazarus was raised from the dead (John 11)
- Jesus Himself rose again from the dead, and
- Tabitha or Dorcas in Acts ch.9 came back to life again.

That's the perfect number of resurrections – 7 in total - recorded in Scripture. There are 7 people who have risen from the dead, and yet still people are not convinced. Still people today say, **'Sure nobody ever came back to tell us!'**

Yes they did – seven times over – people rose again from the dead.

And most important of all, Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of the World, rose again from the dead. He lives, so that we might live also, but still people refuse to believe. And that's exactly what was going on here in John ch.11:45ff. Some believed and put their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, when they saw that he had the power to raise people to life, but others just point blank refused to believe, even though they saw the same evidence with their own eyes. So it's not miracles that convince people to believe, as some might try to tell us today – as they look for signs and wonders – it's God's Word, the Bible, if it is read and taken to our hearts,

that's what will bring people to the point of faith. Taking God at his Word, and believing it to be true. Trusting Jesus as their Saviour, as the One the Bible points us to. That's what we need today: *'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.'* *'The entrance of your Word gives light'*.

The purpose of this miracle was to bring people to faith in Jesus. It worked for some, but others just continued to harden their hearts.

2. Why did the Jewish leaders turn against Jesus to put him to death?

According to John 10:22-33 the miracles were meant to convince them too. They even asked Jesus bluntly if he was the Messiah.

- But then they picked up stones to kill him - Why?
- Because *'he, a mere man, was claiming to be God!'*

So as far as they were concerned He'd broken their Blasphemy Laws!

So now in John 11:46-48, after the resurrection of Lazarus miracle, they call together a full Sanhedrin, the Jewish Ruling Council, to decide what to do:

- They admit he had the power to perform miracles. (v.47)
- But what was their real problem?
- They feared that if He was allowed to carry on as He was, everyone would believe in Him. The evidence was so compelling! (v.48)
- But then they were afraid they would lose political power, because the Romans would come and take them over completely. (v.48b)
- They were afraid of losing *'their place'* (= Temple) and their nation. They were afraid the Romans would come and destroy their Temple that they were trying to cling onto for dear life!
- Notice they were more concerned about being ceremonially clean,

or preserving a ritual, than they were about taking the life of The Son of God! That's why the Jewish Leaders turned against Jesus and decided to put him to death, because it was politically expedient. Jesus was rocking the boat, he was up-setting the status quo. They were afraid of change, so they'd rather keep things the way they were, than risk stepping out into the unknown.

We're all creatures of habit aren't we? There are many of us who don't like change. We're reluctant to up-set the status quo in our personal lives, in our church lives, so we just keep trundling on doing things the way we've always done them. We're afraid to step out into the unknown.

But that's exactly what it is going to take if you are going to get saved! You need to change, you need to repent of your sins, you need to believe in Jesus – and that's going to involve massive change in your life. Don't cling on to life the way you are. Because if you do, it will take you to Hell. Step out in faith tonight, put your trust in Jesus, and pass from death to life, and know the

joy of your sins forgiven. If you do, you will never regret it. Don't be like these Jewish religious leaders, just clinging on to life the way it was. It doesn't work!

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3. Notice the profound words the High Priest said about Jesus. (v.49-53)

One of the men who had the right to sit on the Jewish Ruling Council, the Sanhedrin, was the High Priest. And the High Priest that year was a man named Caiaphas (v.49). He wasn't a particularly godly man, in fact by this stage in Israel's history the true priesthood had disappeared, and the men who were now in this role, were actually just pawns or puppets of the King Herod of the day. There was all sorts of corruption going on behind the scenes between the priesthood and the kings of the day in Israel.

But this man Caiaphas, the High Priest, has been listening to all that's been going on, and all that's been said in the Sanhedrin that day, and perhaps more out of frustration than anything else, he opens his mouth in v.49 and he says:

'You know nothing at all! You do not realise that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.'

(v.50) – So he was saying that it would be better for this one man, Jesus, to lose his life than for the whole nation to be taken over by the Romans. At least, that's what he meant. He wanted them to do away with Jesus. Sacrifice the life of one Jew, rather than stand by and watch the whole nation of Jews being obliterated! That's what he meant – he was absolutely callous about it.

(v.51) - But as High Priest it came out of his mouth in much more significant words. It was really a prophecy. That Jesus' death would be a substitutionary sacrifice in God's sight. Not just for the Jews - but for all who would believe in Him in the future. (N.B. v.51-52). And when he talks about *'the scattered children of God'* – that includes you and me if we have believed in Him today!

Conclusion

In God's sight Jesus' death on the cross was a sacrifice for your sin. Jesus died on that cross as your substitute, dying in your place, taking the punishment you deserved, to purchase your salvation, and forgiveness from your sins, and true cleansing for you - that you might be right with God.

Martha and many of the people accepted Jesus, but these Jewish leaders now blatantly rejected him. According to v.53, it was from that day on that they plotted to take Jesus' life. To get rid of **Him**, before Rome got rid of **them**! And so from vs.54-57 Jesus withdraws once again from public view, waiting for the arrival of the next feast, the Feast of Passover. At that Feast, He would lay down his life for the people, in their place, so that the likes of you and me might be saved. So the question is: Have you accepted Him, or rejected Him?