

Are You Sure You Are Saved?

How to Tell Without Leaving Any Big Questions Unanswered.

#7 in a series on – *Jesus' Way Is Like No Other Way*
Texts from NIV-2010 unless otherwise noted: John 20:24-31, etc.

Intro – Twice in recent days people have asked me a serious question about our Christian faith. One person was asking about baptism and Lent. Another was asking how we can know that we are saved.

As you realize, this series of sermons has been mostly from accounts in John's gospel, with some other encounters, too, like Matthew and Zacchaeus last week.

I had been planning to continue today with the series of in-depth conversations Jesus had with people.

But when God sends promptings it is good to pay them heed. Especially when they are repeated.

That is why this message, although still part of the series, "Jesus Way Is Like No Other Way" takes a different approach.

We live in an age of great skepticism and everything is up for review.

Many scientists, prominent people of all sorts, and lots of everyday folks have no respect for Biblical faith and some are militantly challenging everything we stand for.

BUT... not all people from any of these categories have a new "faith" in self, science, or whatever.

However, since there is so much opposition to our faith, much more than the opposition to any other faith, the result is many Christians are hungry for strong evidences for their Christian beliefs.

We also live in a time when many people, Christians included, do not read the Bible.

In fact, a study I saw recently found that among Christians who do not read the Bible any more often than 3x per week,

there is little difference in the depth of their faith than those who practically never do.

That is very sobering.

But none of this is very much different from times 2000 years back.

They had questions, too. And they sought certainty.

What **IS** very different *now* from *then* is the cause of uncertainty.

Then it was a too little information.

Now it is too much information.

Either way, when any person lacks a sense of clarity or a sufficient understanding about how to live, there is great discomfort.

But, from the Bible there is plenty to go on.

There is no need to be so confused that we cannot make wise choices!

But you, yes you, all by yourself, will have to WORK at it.

Please do NOT just be satisfied with anything I say.

ALWAYS check it out... yourself.

And always check it out with the Bible.

Having said that, it quickly dawns on all of us... that is a tough job.

The Bible is a big book and there is no quickie way to get a grip on all aspects of any topic.

Therefore, I think it is best for all of us to study long and hard on every major subject.

Only by our own personal search and study can we arrive at the point of being comfortable, with our concept of what is TRUE.

Never become so sure or entrenched in an idea that we 'bake it in' in an absolute 'never consider the question again' sense, but that we get to a position with which we are relatively comfortable and established.

There is no need to go around in a perpetual fog about our status with God.

Periodically, something will come up that has us reexamining our ideas and belief.

That is when we have to go back to the Bible.

Here is the one simple and great principle to go by:

**If the Bible says to do something,
and we do it in the best way we know how,
we do not need to 2nd guess what will happen to us.**

Do you remember the extremely popular sitcom, Frasier?

There were many, many episodes of the extremely popular series where Frasier's and Niles' neurotic insecurities were so obvious we all had to laugh.

Some of those episodes made me laugh deliriously.

Even to the point of sensing some of my own foibles.

Of course, part of the wonderful humor of the writers zeroed in on the psychiatrist community as needing to learn from themselves. (But we all need to learn from our life's disappointing and confusing events.)

So we don't have to be in a fog about essential truth that God expects us to follow. Should not the 'unfortunate' circumstances or our own lives point us to a better way?

One side benefit is the realization that surely it CANNOT be very wise to come down overly firm on any subject, either.

After all, we might have to retrace our steps and revise our words after learning more.

That makes us different from Jesus.

Ask him any question and he has a sure answer.

But we don't have his credentials... so going slow is wise.

Still... there is no reason to hesitate to look for Jesus' teaching or to quote the Bible.

In fact, we are told to be ready always to give a reason for having the hope in Christ that we have. [II Timothy 2:15]

Once we have shared our reasons based on the Bible, if the other person believes it and begins to do it, great. If not, the responsibility is on them, not on us.

Soooo.... If you are asked a spiritual question, or if you are asking yourself about any major question, the best place to go is the Bible.

It is also, in my opinion,

OK to start with some person you know

who also loves the Bible for any clues they can share.

But the duty you have remains your own... so study.

John 20:30-31 is a great place to put down your anchor.

In one sentence, John shows everyone of us

the best place to put down the anchor

for our whole life...

Believe in Jesus.

You will always be safe there.

So John reported enough

of all the important things we need to know

that we CAN believe in Jesus and have eternal life.

Let's think about one other thing... believing.

In our language, like others, the word 'believe'

the word itself is often used carelessly.

That has been true all along.

Think back to the Garden of Eden.

Did not Adam and Eve know what to do?

Of course, so knowing about something...

is not the same as knowing about something enough...

to TRUST it and do it no matter what.

Yet in our language, like many others, the word 'believe'

is used for all levels of awareness and actions .

We must understand the concept in the "TRUST" sense.

There is nothing spooky about that.

Look at a US dollar bill. Look at a Zimbabwe bill.

Several decades ago the US bill ceased being a "silver

certificate” and became a Federal Reserve Note, meaning that accepting it as being worth something depends on how much you trust the credit worthiness of the US government. Same with the Zimbabwe bill, it all depends on how much you trust the credit worthiness of their government.

If I want to buy your car, house, boat, anything... which bill will you take?

The one you trust more. Doh!

It is the same with checks.

Every time you take a check as payment for your services of goods, you are showing belief.

Belief in the sense of TRUST or what we also call FAITH.

In fact we refer to the basis of US currency as good faith in the credit worthiness of the US Federal Reserve.

Except for those few people who use NO MONEY in their lives, or never write or cash a check or use a credit card, we all know perfectly well what it is to live by faith-trust.

John has given us better reasons to TRUST in Jesus, than the words on our US paper currency provide a basis for TRUST.

(Who do YOU trust more, our government or God?)

Here is a brief Outline of John’s Gospel.

1 chapter of prologue and intro

10 chapters of Jesus 3-year public ministry

8 chapters of the last week – his death

2 chapters on the resurrection and following.

All of those encounters Jesus had with all kinds of people,

All of those dialogues and in-depth events,

All of those teachings, parables,

All of the terrible sufferings and humiliation,

All of the witnesses to his resurrection,

***All of these things that have been recorded
by John and others
are plenty enough that everyone
CAN BELIEVE in Jesus
and receive the gift of life (salvation)...!***

**There is just one thing
that ever gets in the way of believing in Jesus.**

**It is never because
not enough information can be found.**

**It is only due to pride, foolish pride.
Since Adam and Eve, we all have it.**

**Any person who will surrender that pride,
that foolishness that leads us to insist,
”I must control everything,
or ”I must understand everything,”
discovers this...**

**Surrender is NEVER a loss,
not when we yield ourselves to God.**

**TRUST (BELIEVING) ...
is always the GATEWAY to God.
It always brings enough confidence to realize
we are safe in God’s keeping.**