

**Living Life Alive**  
**Pastor Brad Shellenberg**  
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John 3:1-7; John 5:21-24

***Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.” <sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” <sup>4</sup> “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!” <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’***

***<sup>21</sup> For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup> that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. <sup>24</sup> “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.***

Good morning, I’m Brad Shellenberg, Lead Pastor at Parkview. Today, in our time in the Word of God we will begin looking into the gospel of John. The book of John is positioned in our Bibles as the fourth one in the New Testament.

The three books that precede it are the other three that are called gospels. That is, they are all records of the life of Jesus Christ, written by those who were close enough to Him, to be able to write detailed, accurate accounts of His life, death, resurrection and ascension.

The gospel of John was named after the man who wrote the book. This was not John the Baptist, but one of the twelve disciples that were closest to Jesus and traveled around with Him through all the years of his public ministry.

In fact, John found himself drawn into an even smaller group of those disciples that got to witness things that the nine did not. And even among the three closest to Jesus, John had a way of viewing himself as a special one alone in relationship with the Savior Jesus.

For in his gospel writing, John refers to himself as “the disciple Jesus loved”. Maybe all the disciples felt like they were individually cared for by Jesus, but for John it was so front and center in his thinking that it became how he identified himself.

One of those times he referred to himself by that title is found in chapter 19. It was at the time Jesus was on the cross, not long before His life would end. There, John lists some of the people who were standing nearby.

#### John 19:26-27

***<sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, "Dear woman, here is your son." <sup>27</sup> And he said to this disciple, "Here is your mother." And from then on this disciple took her into his home.***

In that moment, Jesus, in his incredible selflessness and love for others, asked John to look after Mary, His mother. John was certainly one of those closest to the Lord and he was a very devoted follower. But the man was still very human, like the rest of us.

It was one of the other gospel writers, Mark, who tells us about the day that John and his brother James approached Jesus and told him that they wanted Jesus to do whatever they asked of Him.

When Jesus asked them what they wanted, they said they wanted Jesus to let them sit on either side of Him, closest to Him, when He took His seat on His throne as King.

What John asked for that day got a rebuke from the Lord that he didn't have the right to ask for that. It got the rest of Jesus' disciples quite riled up about the audacious, presumptuous request he had made, and it ended up with all the disciples getting a lesson on the kingdom of God.

The lesson was - if you want to be great in God's kingdom, you don't aim for the top chair, you get down below others and serve them. That day Jesus taught them that being great in God's kingdom is not achieved by seeking glory and authority and stature, but by humbling oneself before others. The one who is first in God's economy, Jesus said, is the one who makes themselves the slave of everyone else.

While John did well in following Jesus, like us, he needed to deal with his own pride of life issues. That's a bit about the disciple Jesus loved, the one who wrote the book, but in this introduction to the gospel I want us to take a few moments to consider the content and purpose of the book of John.

This series of messages is entitled "Living Life Alive". When you hear those three words put together, you might respond, "How else can you live life?" Either you are alive or you are not alive.

While that is true of our physical lives, which can be monitored by such things as breathing, heartbeat, and waves of brain activity, there is more to life than our physical state of being.

Central to all that the Bible would reveal to us about what it means to be created human beings, is this . . . we also have a soul. We are much more than the sum of the chemical reactions going on in our physical bodies.

And it is that life we live on the inside with our personalized desires, our inner thoughts and our feelings that really determines how we experience life and even whether we care about our own life or the lives of others.

Many years ago, when I was in junior high school, I played saxophone in the jazz band in our school. We spent many hours rehearsing together, and most of those in the band would practice individually to perfect our own parts in each of the pieces we played.

Our director entered our band into the provincial festival that would determine which band would win the honor of best in the province and earn the right to go to the national jazz band festival in Toronto. After our band played, we waited quietly for the adjudicators to finish writing their notes and then they would speak to us about our performance.

When all the bands had played and everyone was seated in the auditorium, the final results were announced in very dramatic fashion starting with third place, and then second place, and finally the winner of the festival. Every student waited anxiously to hear the name of their school being called out as the ones who had won first place.

I remember when they said the name of our school, and the instant celebration that erupted from all those sitting around me. It's one of those memories that got burned, somehow more deeply in my mind, than millions of others moments I have lived.

There have been other experiences, like witnessing the birth of our children, or moments when something amazingly beautiful and good in our world inspired me, giving me a taste of joy of soul. It made me feel, at those moments, like I was more alive than at other times.

All these experiences remind us that life, where it really counts, is lived at the level of our souls, our inner life. But these experiences are only temporary and fleeting and they leave us wishing that life could be continually lived "more alive". Ultimately, God created us with a reservoir that will only be filled and leave us feeling satisfied, when we allow God to fill it.

The apostle John, the author of this gospel, tells us very directly that this was the whole purpose of his writing as he recounted for others what he learned as he watched, listened to, and believed in Jesus.

If you have a Bible with you, you can open it to John chapter 20. It is near the end of the gospel that John provides a summary of his purpose in putting into writing his account of the life of Jesus.

John 20:30-31

***<sup>30</sup> Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

John said that his desire was that people would come into the place of having a new kind of life that Jesus, the Savior, could provide. All through the gospel is talk about life, what it is like, and how to find it.

The words of the Lord Jesus, recorded in John chapter 10, are this . . .

John 10:10

***<sup>10</sup> . . . I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.***

The offer of the Lord was to give to us a new life of soul that He alone could give to us, and that it would be in a measure that would bring people fully alive. Life to the full. Life in abundance. Life, truly alive.

As was read for us earlier, in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, there is a need for God to bring new spiritual life to our souls, before we can know and experience the vitality of having our souls fully alive.

Let's go back to John's purpose statement for this gospel . . .

John 20:31

***<sup>31</sup> . . . these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

The end he wants us to discover and lead us into, is the beginning of a new quality of life from God that is fully alive, and that also has the new dimension of a life that continues on into eternal life. And the way to that life, is by seeing Jesus the Messiah for who He really was and is, and by believing Him and trusting Him to be that Savior for us. Jesus own words from John chapter 11, were this . . .

John 11:25

***<sup>25</sup> . . . "I am the resurrection and the life."***

And in chapter 14 . . .

John 14:6

***<sup>6</sup> . . . "I am the way and the truth and the life."***

And again in chapter 5 . . .

John 5:24

***<sup>24</sup> “. . . whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.***

So, John takes his readers through a discovery of who Jesus is, and as we go through this gospel together, we will be invited to receive from God, His gift that makes possible, like no other way - “Living Life Alive”. Next Sunday we will start with the first section of chapter 1.

In a few moments, we will receive the Lord’s Supper, as we usually do on the first Sunday of each month. Before we turn our thoughts to the cross of Jesus today, let’s take a moment to respond to God’s grace that gives us the gift of new life.

**(Prayer of Response)**

John, the gospel writer, also wrote in his letter in the Bible called 1 John, the following . . .

1 John 4:9-10

***<sup>9</sup> This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.***

The God who created us loves us. The God who made you because He wanted the person “you” to have life – loves you. And God showed you how much He loves you when He sent Jesus to bring you the gift of life, by giving up His own life on the cross.

John used strong language when he said that Jesus became an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Jesus’ life was taken away from Him, so that you and I could be forgiven and our relationship with God could be restored.

**COMMUNION**

Benediction

John 3:16

***<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.***