

The Point of No Return

Introduction

I. Opening Illustration

A. Light

1. Let me shed some light on this situation...
2. If we are going to inspect something for defects are we going to do this with the lights on or off?
3. Requirements for a certain amount of light to be present to properly inspect the quality of a Kohler bath or shower (measured in foot-candles)

B. Signs

1. What do road signs do? They bestow information and point you in the direction of assistance or to a destination.
2. How do I know that I am getting close to Disney World? If I were to have a car wreck in Alabama, who am to call?
3. The sign isn't the destination but is the means by which, if you follow them, you can arrive at the destination.

II. Context of the Lesson

A. Light and Signs in the Gospel of John

1. We do not have a blind faith. Light brighter than any of this world has been shown upon the evidence. Every sign along the road has Jesus written on it.
2. The Testimony of the Light and Signs
 - a) John the Baptist, the chosen 12, those that saw the signs and believes, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the official whose son was healed, the lame man of 38 years, the 5000 who ate the loaves and the fish, the officers sent to arrest Jesus (no one ever spoke like this man), the blind man from birth, and God himself
3. And yet the conflict grows day by day because of the blind and deaf
4. We have been following John through the text as he leads us to Jesus, and if you haven't been convinced yet listen to this...
5. We are about to move into the final week of the life of Jesus, but before he makes this transition, he culminates the three year ministry of Jesus with one final sign, with one final flash of light that proves that Jesus is who he says he is if only we are willing to open our eyes and listen with our ears

III. Purpose of the Lesson

A. What sign do you show us?

- a) John 2:18–19 - [18] So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" [19] Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (ESV)

B. Jesus came to save man from their sins, and in order to do this he was going to have to die. John records for us the path of Jesus that led to the cross, and along the way there are multiple signs and lights showing Jesus to be who he said he is.

C. From the very beginning, what is everything building to? What is the ultimate sign that will confirm and eliminate all doubt? Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. The entirety of the scriptures have been pointing to this event.

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- D. In John 11, however, we read of the straw that broke the camels back. The sign that seals the deal for the fate that Jesus prophesied of in John 2:19.
- E. The sign that moves many to the point of no return, both in a positive and negative sense of the phrase

Lesson

I. The Culmination of Three Years

A. The Faith of the Apostles

- a) John 11:4 - [4] But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” (ESV)
- 1. Similar language that was used in John 9:3 - The healing of the blind man was to bring glory to God.
- 2. After 2 days Jesus decides that the time is right to make his way to Bethany
 - a) John 11:11–16 - [11] After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” [12] The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” [13] Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. [14] Then Jesus told them plainly, “**Lazarus has died, [15] and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe.** But let us go to him.” [16] So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” (ESV)
- 3. How closely have you been following after Jesus? Even those closest to Jesus weren’t fully convinced. Are you willing to keep walking with him? Even unto death?

B. The Faith of Martha

- a) John 11:20–27 - [20] So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. [21] Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. [22] But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” [23] Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” [24] Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” [25] Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, [26] and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. **Do you believe this?**” [27] She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.” (ESV)
- 1. Jesus has shown you who he is. He has told you who he is. Do you limit Jesus power to save, or do you confess his power and rely on him for life?
- 2. Before Jesus moves to the physical he stresses the only true life that matters and that is your eternal soul.
- 3. Are we willing to see past the physical that we see and desire and live for the spiritual? Do you believe this?

C. The Faith of All Who See and Hear

- a) John 11:32 - [32] Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” (ESV)
- 1. Look at the confidence that both Mary and Martha had in Jesus. They both state the same thing.
 - a) John 11:37 - [37] But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?” (ESV)

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2. Jesus is moved with emotion. Jesus loved Lazarus and the people are seeing this. These people make the same confession as Mary and Martha. But the focus remains on his physical life and not on the spiritual.
3. Are you walking into death thinking that it's the end like Thomas? Are you wishing that Jesus would have gotten here sooner so that Lazarus could have been saved like his sisters and these people?
4. Jesus shall be glorified and performs a great sign to point all men to the life giver that he came to this earth to be.
 - a) John 11:39–44 - [39] Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." [40] Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" [41] So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. [42] **I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.**" [43] When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." [44] The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." (ESV)
 - b) John 11:45 - [45] **Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him,** (ESV)
5. Are your eyes open, can you hear what Jesus has done? Do you see that this world isn't what life is all about? Will you live though you may die?

D. The Motive is Revealed

1. Sadly, not all are willing to see what true life is!
 - a) John 11:46–47 - [46] but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. [47] So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "**What are we to do? For this man performs many signs.**"
2. This is the perfect question to ask! The signs are only pointing in one direction. What are we to do?
 - a) John 11:48 - [48] If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both **our place and our nation.**"
3. This goes back to the conversation that Jesus had with Martha. It doesn't matter if we die physically. It doesn't matter if we lose OUR PLACE AND OUR NATION physically. This physical life isn't what life is all about.
4. If we don't realize this, look at the depths of depravity to which we will sink
 - a) John 11:49-53 - [49] But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. [50] Nor do you understand that **it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.**" [51] He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, [52] and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. [53] So from that day on they made plans to put him to death. (ESV)
5. Going all the way back to John 2:18-19, this was the path that our savior walked, knowing that death awaited him. And yet he continued down the road so that he could save me from my sins.
6. There is no denying who Jesus is. There is no denying where he came from. There is a question of what matters more to you though? This physical life you live today, of the eternal life that is to come?

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Conclusion

I. What Do You Think?

a) **John 11:56 - [56] They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?" (ESV)**

A. POSITIVE - What has the light revealed? Did you follow the signs to the destination?

1. Have you made up your mind? Have you believed? Have you confessed?
2. Martha makes the confession. She has seen enough. She has heard enough. Jesus is the Christ.
3. Jesus knows what the will of the father is. He always lives to do his will. Even knowing that death awaits him he turns and faces Jerusalem.
4. Have you believed in what you have heard and have come to know that Jesus is the Christ the son of the living God?
5. Do not weaken in your faith. Do not return to the life you once lived.

B. NEGATIVE - What has the light revealed? Did you follow the signs to the destination?

1. Or have you seen it all? Have you heard it all? And yet you refuse to believe
2. Are you like the the chief priest and Pharisees who refuse to submit though the light and the signs clearly show who Jesus must be
3. Do you refuse to follow Jesus because that means you will lose your power and your will will have to be devoted to someone else's will

II. The Point of No Return

A. The destination at the end of the journey

1. For Martha, for Jesus, for many of his disciples, they believe and will not turn away from following the Lord
2. For the chief priest and Pharisees, the refuse to believe and refuse to follow the lord
3. In your own life, as it will be with all of us, when it comes to an end what destination are you approaching? When your physical life is over there are no second chances. Death is the point of no return.
 - a) In the best sense of the phrase you have reached the point of no return and now are fully and completely devoted to God and will spend eternity in God's presence?
 - b) In the worst sense of the phrase, have you reached the point of no return and have fully and completely rejected Jesus and his power to give you true life and will spend eternity apart from God?
4. The choice is yours - Are you to the point of complete devotion to your God? OR Are you to the point of complete devotion to your self? What destination, what point of no return, are you approaching?