



SERIES: Believe

SPEAKER: DAN COKE

Saturday, December 30, 2023

Scripture: John 5:39-40

TITLE: The Word of Life

John 5:39–40 (ESV): “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.”

The tradition of the rabbis involved immersing themselves in the Torah and studying the prophets. The men questioning Jesus in this passage would have been very much acquainted with these practices. Jesus even points this out. He said they search the Scriptures. But what are they searching for? According to Jesus, they are searching for eternal life.

The next question is: what is eternal life? And we need to think about this question the same way Jesus’ audience is thinking about it. In other words, let not read modern, evangelical ideas and concepts into this question. For example, they are not searching for a way to get to heaven when they die. Heaven is great but that’s not what they are searching for. Jesus said they are searching for “eternal life.”

Eternal life is not only long life or life forever, but it is the most enjoyable and fulfilling life that a human being can experience. In other words, life as it was in the garden of Eden before sin entered the world. These Jewish leaders are trying to figure how close they can get to that kind of life. So, they search the Scriptures for inspiration on how to obtain a life as close to what Adam and Eve had, or even close to what the nation had under King David’s rule. That’s the blessed life. Those were time periods marked by a close relationship with God and prosperity.

Unfortunately, there are still some people today in the church who read and teach the Bible the same way these religious leaders did. They search the Scriptures as if it’s a magic book with special incantations. They say things like, “If I just recite the Scriptures enough my problems will go away or I’ll get the blessing that I desire.” The Bible essentially becomes nothing more than just a book of blessings and curses. Lastly, they think they will be saved by their own good works.

Jesus challenges this wrong way of thinking about the Word of God. First, He is the Word made flesh. Secondly, He is the focal point of the entire message of the Bible. All the law and the prophets point us back to Jesus. The law reveals our need for salvation. The prophets promise the arrival of the Messiah in history.

It's all in the Bible because Jesus put it there. He is not only the author but is the very Word made flesh. If you do not understand who the biblical Jesus is or you get Him wrong, then your entire religious belief system will be wrong.

Lastly, Jesus does promise eternal life to those who believe. Jesus promises us not just life forever or a few blessings here and there. But, He promises us life with Him and the Father forever! This is the blessed life. But we can only receive this life by coming to Jesus.

And now we come full circle to the problem. These men are refusing to come to Jesus to receive life from Him. They don't like how He makes them feel when He calls out their sin and hypocrisy. They don't want to look bad in front of the people so rather than admit when they're wrong, they plot revenge.

These men don't want to give up control of their lives to this humble Messiah. They love their own lives more than they love God.

Eternal life, the forever, blessed life with God is found only in Jesus. And if we give up on our own way of doing life and turn to Him with faith and repentance, He will give us eternal life. Amen.