

John 21:20-25

~ His Boundless Beauty ~

Introduction

Believe it or NOT this is now the **64th sermon** I have preached in the Gospel of John!

We began this series on March 7th 2021...

Around 1484 **days** ago – roughly 35,616 **hours** – or 2,136,960 **minutes**... not that anyone is really counting...

Back in those days the Harrises **only had** one solitary child...

Our churches only had **3 main locations**...

The Hans had only **just started** attending!

And Craig (it is said) did **NOT** have as many grey hairs on his head!

Mind you neither did Rhoi...

In fact some have even said that Rhoi has caused many of those grey hairs on Craig...

But nevertheless this is now the **64th sermon** I have preached on the Gospel of John...

I actually found myself becoming **quite emotional** this week thinking about ending John...

This gospel has taught me more than I **could have ever** have imagined:

I have **seen things** and **learnt things** and **discovered things** that I will **forever be grateful** for!

How to end

But the dilemma I found myself facing this week was:

How do you end such a **glorious** and **momentous** gospel?!?!

How do you do justice to John?!?!

What do you say – how do you say it – what illustrations do you use?!?!

I mean there are **many ways** we could probably end these last few verses of John 21:

We could take this opportunity to summarize some of the **big themes** and **highlights** we found in this Gospel (and certainly I will be doing that one day in the near-future:

Sort of a summation of John's Gospel – looking at all of the things I have learnt and synthesising them down...

Maybe we could do a kind of **greatest hits** in the life and times of Jesus...almost like a **B-side track** to the tape that we've just listened to!

More Wonderful

But if there is **one thing** that I want you to get from the **last 5 years** spent in labouring hard to understand John's Gospel it is simply this:

Jesus Christ is a wellspring of life – who is altogether lovely and more wonderful than you will ever know

John Flavel

It was John Flavel the Puritan pastor who wrote many years ago in a book titled the *Loveliness of Jesus* – who said:

Is Jesus Christ altogether lovely? Then I entreat you to set your souls upon this lovely One. For I am sure that such an object as is represented here, would compel love from the coldest breast and hardest heart. Away with those empty nothings, away with this vain deceitful world, which deserves not the thousandth part of the love you give to it. Let all stand aside and give way to Christ. O if only you knew His worth and excellency, what He Himself is,

what He Himself has done for you, and deserved from you, you would need no arguments of mine to persuade you to love Jesus Christ!

I think that's the argument that John is making as he comes to the final close of his Gospel!

Never Outpace

If there is one thing that he wants us to see in these verses – it's that:

The story of Jesus is **never fully over** – there is **more to come** in the life of a Christian who is following Jesus and keeping their eyes fixed on Him...

Main point

And so the main point that I want us to see as we come to the end of the story is this:

Whatever the future may bring in our lives as Christians we must ultimately keep our eyes fixed on following the One who is more wonderful than we can ever know...

We're gonna see that in 2 points:

[A call to] *keep your eyes fixed on Jesus* [20-23]

[Because] *Jesus is more wonderful than we will ever know* [24-25]

John 21

So chapter John 21 beginning at verse 20 – for the **very last time** in His Gospel John writes:

So Peter turned around and saw the disciple Jesus loved following them, the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and asked, "Lord, who is the one that's going to betray you?"²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?"²² "If I want him to remain until I come," Jesus answered, "what is that to you? As for you, follow me."²³ So this rumour spread to the brothers and sisters that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not tell him that he would not die, but, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. And we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which, if

every one of them were written down, I suppose not even the world itself could contain the books that would be written...

Opening Gambit

It's an interesting little story isn't it... so many strange and interesting details that John **chooses to** focus on...

And there's a few **key things** to see – first we've noted **several times** that John throughout the Gospel always **refers to himself** as:

"The disciple whom Jesus loved"

And that **wasn't** a boast for John – he **wasn't** trying to make himself better than other Christians – he was **simply a man** who was so **taken back** at the **grace** and **mercy** and **love** of the Jesus Christ that he **could NOT help** but refer to himself as:

The disciple whom **Jesus loved!**

I mean John was **totally enamoured** that Jesus could love a sinner like him – that he **could NOT help** but allow that to be the **driving force** behind his very ministry!

John is often called *the Apostle of love* – he speaks of love **more than** any **other disciple** in the New Testament Scriptures!

And **if you had the choice** between calling yourself *John* or *the disciple whom Jesus loved*:

You're probably going to go with the **second option!**

And that actually **tells us something profound** about John's heart in this Gospel!

John was a disciple so **overwhelmed and enamoured** with the **grace** and **mercy** of the Lord Jesus – that he **couldn't help** but **be humbled** by this love!

I mean there's just **no grounds** in the Christian life to be arrogant & boasting about how wonderful **we are** to God!

And that really does appear to be **the driving force** behind John's ministry!

Wrote this Gospel

But **up until** this point that title has **NOT** been **overly clear** or **emphatic** who it is that Jesus loves – but this text in John chapter 21 makes it **abundantly clear** that the disciple whom Jesus loves is **John himself** because he says there:

It's also the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the last supper and asked the Lord, who was it that is going to betray you?

And then he sort of **seals it** in verse 24 – by saying:

And this is the disciple who testifies to these things...

That is:

*Right now as you're reading this **Gospel** – as you're reading this account of the life and times of Jesus – the one who is writing this Gospel – the one who is testifying to these things – he is the one who **wrote these things down** – and we (the disciples) know that his testimony is true!*

So that sort of **seals it** for John – that puts the lock on it:

*The disciple whom Jesus loved was John himself – and he is the one **writing these things down** and who is testifying to these things in this book!*

Close to Christ

But then notice **this other comment** of John in verse 20 here:

*This is the one who **leaned back** against Jesus at the last supper...*

And I think the idea there is that John is showing us the **reciprocal love** that:

He had for Jesus!

As Jesus was the one who loved him – he **also responded** to **that love** by saying:

And I also loved Him back!

highlighting the intimate relationship that he had with Jesus Christ!

He says:

I was the one who was literally **leaning back against** the breast/or the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ!

I mean there's just **no closer place** to be **in the Christian life** – but **right next to** the heart of Jesus!

To be **so enamoured** by His love and taken by His beauty – that you cannot help but **feel close to Him!**

And it's a challenge to each and everyone of us here this morning:

Is that where your heart is today?

Is that where your affection are tuned?

Like Peter and like John are you heeding the words of Jesus to *follow me* because you love Him?!?!

I love what A.W Pink said about this in his commentary of John **in John 13** – he says:

*This is the blessed **portion** and **privilege** of every true believer who is near to the heart of Christ...that we like John can look up into our Saviour's face and ask Him any question we desire...*

It's a wonderful thing to be so close to Jesus that you feel His heart!

And it's a good place to be as John finishes up this Gospel!

Follow Me

And that sort of gets us to this **third detail** of the text – this section of John 21 is **coming on the heels** of Peter's **restoration & repentance** that we saw last week – and it seems as though Jesus in **verse 19** is telling Peter to:

Follow me...

And Peter it seems has taken that command literally where Jesus has gotten up from the breakfast and is now walking down the beach with Peter literally walking **by His side!**

Now most commentators agree that this command in **verse 19** is a **symbolic statement** by Jesus in the sense of Matthew 16:24 – where Jesus says:

*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me...
For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it...*

So maybe Jesus meant this **command** in John 21 to be taken **symbolically**:

*Peter in your task of shepherding my sheep Peter... in your task of feeding my lambs – and tending my people – **don't get distracted** in your mission of leading the church...but in every endeavour you take follow my example...follow my lead...deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me...*

You're gonna **need to do that** daily if you are to be successful in shepherding my sheep!

And to be honest that's a **pretty good way** to understand verse 19!

Or it could be that Jesus did mean to give this command **literally** as if He was saying to Peter:

Hey Peter, get up, follow me, we're going for a walk, I have something to tell you!

And they go off walking down the beach...

Getting Distracted

Now it kind of **doesn't really matter** which way we take the command in verse 19 – because in **verse 21** we actually see Peter **immediately getting distracted** in his command to follow Christ!

Peter is **already beginning** to take his eyes off of Jesus – verse 21:

When Peter saw him [that's John following behind them], he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?"

What about that guy?

What about my brother John?

The Irony

Now can we just stop and appreciate **the irony** of the situation here...

After everything we **just read** last week about Peter and Jesus!

Here you have Peter restored back to **ministry** – restored to **repentance** – back to **fellowship** after denying Jesus **3 painful times**...and Jesus **lovingly** and **compassionately** reinstates him as a faithful Apostle – reinstates him as a disciple of Christ:

You're gonna feed my sheep – you're gonna tend my lambs...you're gonna follow after me...

And it's NOT but **30 seconds later** in a private conversation:

Where Peter is **already getting distracted** by other things!

He's already starting to **take his eyes** off of Jesus!

Peter's Concern

Now look **it could be** that Peter was **genuinely concerned** for John – like maybe after learning about **his unavoidable death** in verse 18 – maybe Peter was saying to Jesus:

Lord what about my brother – what about his death – I'm concerned for John – I love John – is he going to be martyred for the faith too – is he going to be okay?!?!

And Peter could be **genuinely concerned** for his brother in Christ...

Could be that – or it could be:

*Ummm...I'm not **overly thrilled** about being martyr for the faith Lord – is John gonna get something like that? – What about this guy – what about him – what kind of death does he get to die with?*

Now we **don't really know** the tone **Peter** was using here:

Was he concerned or was he upset!

But we **do know** the **rebuke** that Peter receives in verse 22 – Jesus around and **looks at Peter** and says:

If I want him to remain until I come... what is that to you?

In other words – Jesus just told Peter **the ancient equivalent** of:

That's none of your business!

That is none of your concern!

What is it to you what I choose to do with **my disciple** and the way that he dies?!?!

You have **no business** sticking your nose in the business of sovereign God of the world!

If I want him to remain until I come (hypothetically speaking) – what is that to you?!?!

Peter your task is – verse 22:

Is following me!

You follow me!

Christian Experience

And **don't we need** to hear that command every single day of our lives!

I mean **is this NOT** the common Christian experience of the daily Christian life...?!?!

Where **it's NOT but** one minute **after** being **restored back** to Jesus – or back to our spouse – back to our kids – we repent and we come back to a right relationship with other – where you and I are already:

Distracted by other things...

Distracted by worldly concerns...

Other mums parenting better – other dads leading better – other pastors filling up pews – other Christians getting married – other people having kids – other friends finding a spouses...

And we start to become so **self-absorbed** in the path that God has set out for **others** that we start to **lose faithfulness** on the road that He has set out for us!

We become such Navel-Gazing Nellys **with other people** that we start to become **ineffective** in the call that God has placed upon us!

The Antidote

And **the antidote** to us **becoming overly distracted** & self-absorbed with what other people are doing – is the **rebuke of Peter** in verse 22:

If I want him to remain until I come what is that to you? As for you, follow me...

And **that is the question** that should penetrate our hearts as we step into 2025:

What is it to you, when they have a marriage without conflict or fighting. As for you and your wife – you follow me!

*What is it to you when they get the **first pick** of what college they get to attend? You follow me!*

What is it to you when they seem to always come into some extra money?

What is it to you that their children are following Jesus and obeying the bible?

What is it to you if their kids don't sin as publicly as yours do?

*What is it to you when her days are **never filled** with conflict or physical pain?*

What is it to you that they own a house – drive better cars – make better money – or have fewer trials...

YOU FOLLOW ME!

YOU KEEP YOUR EYES ON ME!

Don't get distracted by what I am doing in my Kingdom!

Because your simple task in the Christian life is:

Follow me!

Keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus!

Don't get distracted!

Or as the author of Hebrews puts it:

*Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith...let us **lay aside** every weight and sin which **so easily** entangles us!*

The key to being an effective **evangelist** – an effective **pastor** – an effective **missionary** – effective **mum** – an effective **dad** – an effective Christian **bearing fruit** to the glory of God – is to:

Simply follow Him!

Walking where Jesus walked – and doing what Jesus commands!

You know most of our **issues** and **problems** in the Christian life **happen because** we take our eyes off of Jesus Christ!

Other lessons

Now there's a few other things we learn about Jesus and following...

In verse 22 we see several other **compelling reasons** to follow Christ...and these **aren't necessarily** the main point of the text but they are significant enough for us to see – first:

Jesus is evidently **in control** of every single second – of every single day!

He is a Saviour who rules with divine foreknowledge and sovereignty over every aspect of our lives!

He says:

If it is my will that he [John] remains until I come, what is that to you?

This is Jesus implying that He has **total sovereignty** to take someone home the moment He so desires...

Jesus is in control of every single second – of every single person – of every single day!

R.C Sproul likes to say:

There are no maverick molecules in this world...

Christ is in control of every single second – of every single person – of every single day!

Suffering

And that also **certainly includes** our suffering in the Christian life – our trials – our pain!

As Jesus says to Peter:

You're gonna suffer for my sake – and your suffering will be to the glory of God!

Our Lord promises things like this **all over** the pages of Scripture:

*If I bring you through trials, I will bring you out again, and I will **be enough** for you, and I will be present...*

Psalm 73:26:

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart—my portion forever...

Peter himself says **later in life** when writing to the churches says in 1st Peter 5:

*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting your cares and anxieties on Him, **because He cares for you...***

Friends the Lord is a faithful Shepherd!

He is a faithful God!

Who is in control of every single second of every single day – and that makes following Him:

All the more worth it!

This is a man writing those words knowing that he's going to die!

And he is sure that if the Lord can care for him, and confirm him, and strengthen him, and restore, him and establish him, then He can do it for all of us!

Return

Second – we also understand that Jesus plans on coming back at the end of this world in the second coming – He says:

*If it is my will that he remains **until I come** what is that to you?*

So Jesus says – He is coming again!

He is one day coming back to clean up the mess and to finish the job!

He told us this in John 14 verse 3:

*I go and prepare a place for you, and I will **come again** and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also...*

He promises to never leave us!

And He promises to return to us!

He says:

As I go away I will send my personal Holy Spirit and I will be closer to you than your very breath!

So Jesus is going – but He promises He will return!

Precision

And then notice what we learn in verse 23 about Jesus and what it means to follow Him faithfully – verse 23 says:

So this rumour [about John never dying] spread to the brothers and sisters that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not tell him that he would not die, but, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?”

So apparently **as a result** of the conversation between Peter and Jesus – a rumour had been spread throughout the **early church** that because Jesus said to Peter:

If it is my will for him to remain until I come – what is that to you?

That people had **wrongly misinterpreted** Jesus to say:

*John’s NOT going to die...He’s going to live up **right up until** the second coming!*

But notice **John** immediately corrects that notion by saying:

*Yet Jesus did not tell him (Peter) that John would was not gonna die – but that he merely said **[hypothetically speaking]** – if I want him to remain **until I come** what is that to you?*

Do you see the difference?

One is a **hypothetical** – the other is **definitive...**

Hermeneutics

The point though is this:

You do **NOT** get to re-interpret Jesus **any way** you want!

You do **NOT** get to **define** the words of Jesus in any way you desire!

If we are to **faithfully follow** and **listen to** the words of Jesus – then we must **accurately know** and **obey** the **definitive words** of Jesus!

And that begins with:

Interpreting Jesus correctly!

Jesus has a specific meaning!

Jesus has authorial intent!

And John is saying:

Do **NOT** get lazy when interpreting the words of Jesus!

Or any other book of the bible!

Jesus is a precise Saviour!

He is an accurate God!

And **it's important** that when He speaks **we listen!**

Because there is so much **bad theology** and **doctrine** that comes as a result of people being **lazy & ignorant** with the word of God!

Or as one pastor says:

So much bad theology comes from reading the bible with blurry eyes!

Taking a **verse here** – changing a **verse there** – and sticking **ideas together** – so that you come up with a more manageable Jesus:

One who is weak-willed/limp wristed/ and created in your own image!

One who is **far more manageable** to comprehend!

Simply because you cannot understand the mind of God – and how He works His sovereign will!

Or simply because there's a doctrine that is **too hard** or **too difficult** to accept or comprehend – and so we try to compromise as creatures in order to accept the hard words of Jesus!

And Peter actually spoke about this in his letter to the church^{3w} – in 2nd Peter chapter 3 when he says that:

*There are some things in Paul's letter that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable **twist to their own destruction**, as they do the **other Scriptures**...*

And so the twisting of the Scriptures has always been a problem since the early days of the church...

And what John is **emphatically saying** to us through the text of John 21 – is:

STOP IT!

Stop trying to manage Jesus!

Jesus is a precise God!

He is an accurate Saviour!

When he speaks – He does **NOT** stutter!

He **doesn't stumble** over His words!

He is **NOT** unclear when it comes to His authority!

He **actively** and **carefully** and **precisely** speaks His word **into** our hearts by His Spirit!

And Jesus **doesn't teach us** something on the pages of Scripture and then say:

But have your own interpretation...whatever works for you... whatever makes you feel good!

Part of having a biblical hermeneutic when interpreting the Scriptures is:

What does the author intend to say?

What is the author's intent of this particular passage?

And that goes for any book of the bible that you're reading!

So don't get distracted in following Jesus!

Point #2

But then the **second part** of this text is this – don't get distracted in following Jesus **NOT only** because He is an **accurate Saviour** – but secondly because:

*He is altogether lovely and **more wonderful than we can ever know***

So have a look at verse 24 – John writes:

Now this is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. And we know that his testimony is true...

So before John gets to the goodness & the glory of Jesus and everything He has done **in verse 25** – John **first wants** to make sure that we know everything he has written **about Jesus** in this Gospel:

Is true!

It's accurate!

It's inspired!

It's historical!

We can trust the testimony of this Gospel because of:

Who this testimony is about – and **what He has done** for us?

And you might be asking – well what exactly is it that Jesus has done?!?!

Verse 25:

*Well He is **the one** who **also did** many other things, which if every one of them were written down, I suppose that not even the world itself could contain the books that would be written...*

Boundless Beauty

Now it sounds very familiar to John's other statement given in chapter 20 verse 30 & 31:

*Now Jesus did **many other signs** in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. ³¹ But these ones are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God...*

So one is about **the signs** of Jesus and the miraculous works that He has performed – but the other is about **everything else** He **did** and **said** that are **NOT recorded** in this book!

And what John is saying to us in these final few verses – is that:

If all of the **heavens** and all of the **skies** were **giant sheets** of paper – and all the **trees** and **forests** **quills** of pens to write with – and all the **oceans** and **rivers** were giant lakes of **ink**:

We **still would NOT** scratch the surface of this incomparable Christ!

Take all of the resources – all the supplies – all of the money – all of the time – and all of eternity and we would **still NOT know** the **boundless beauty** of our incomparable King!

Plumb the Depths

It would be like a little boy **with a flashlight** on a starry night sky trying to plumb the depths of the cosmos!

And of course the instrument he uses is **far too small** for the size of the object –but he nevertheless loves to plumb those depths!

Or like a little boy **swimming across** the ocean in the Mariana Trench and **looking down at 36 thousand and 70 feet** of water – and saying with Augustine:

I can see the depths – I just can't see the bottom!

Samuel Rutherford

It reminds me of the quote **I often use** from Samuel Rutherford [the 17th Century Puritan] who wrote a bunch of letters trying to convince his friend to believe in Jesus – and he says to this woman:

Jesus Christ is a wellspring of life, but who knows how deep this well truly is?

*This soul of ours has love, and cannot but love some fair one – And O what a **fair** One, what an **only** One, what an **excellent** One is He...*

*Put the beauty of **ten thousand worlds** like the Garden of Eden into one place; put all of the trees, and rocks, and rivers, and oceans, and flowers, and smells, and colours, and tastes, and joys into that one place!*

*O what a fair and excellent place would that be! And yet **it would be far less beautiful** than the beauty of that dearest loved Christ!*

It would be far less than one drop of rain to all the seas, rivers, lakes, and oceans of ten thousand universes before Him!

*O, pity forevermore that there should be such a one as Christ, so boundless, so bottomless, and so incomparable in excellence, glory and sweetness, and yet **so few take Him...***

Insufficient

Right this is **the mystery** of our incomparable King – this is the beauty of our boundless Saviour:

That we can **know** and **love** and **worship** and **praise** a God who is altogether **lovely** – altogether **worthy** – but then we **turn around** at the end of the day and say to ourselves:

But we have **NOT even begun** to scratch the surface of His boundless love!

He is altogether lovely!

He is altogether worthy!

He is altogether beauty!

He is altogether Christ!

And you and I cannot **ever begin** to see just how wonderful and beautiful and boundless He truly is!

And it makes preaching Him and describing him an **impossible task** as a preacher because you know that:

All **language** and **superlatives** (all description of Him) are so **utterly vain & insufficient** to get across **just how wonderful** and **beautiful** He truly is!

One pastor says:

We could never with the best technologies in the world contain the message and beauty of Jesus... it would be like trying to play a Mozart symphony on a broken piano. Like serving a gourmet meal in a snack-bar. Like having the breath of God inside an ordinary human-being, or like light shining in darkness and darkness trying to master the light!

That is what it's like **trying to plumb** the depths of our incomparable Saviour!

C.S Lewis

It reminds me of that quote from C.S Lewis' in *The weight of Glory* where Lewis compares our **finite** human-experiences of **beauty** to the **insatiable longings** for Christ and heaven... he says:

*The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was found **will always betray us** if we trust ***in those gifts***... for it was ***NOT in them*** (that true beauty was found) but what came **through them!** and what came through was **the human longing for more!***

These gifts – these joys – these desires – these experiences:

*Are the **scent** of a flower we have **NOT** found – **the echo** of a tune we have **NOT** heard, and **news from a country** we have **NOT** yet visited!*

All of the **books** and all of the **music** and all of the **joy** and all of the **beauty** cannot contain the boundless/and bottomless beauty of our incomparable Christ!

Words are far too insufficient to describe to you the joys of knowing Jesus!

Narnia

And again there's another Lewis quote from *The Chronicles of Narnia* this time (also written by Lewis) where Lucy has returned to back to Narnia a second time after the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe – and she sees **Aslan again** for the **first time** and she runs up to Aslan hiding herself in His golden-mane and she says:

*Aslan! Oh Aslan You are **so much bigger** than what I remember!*

And Aslan says:

That is because you're older my child...

And Lucy says:

So it's not because you are bigger?

And Aslan responds:

No I am not...

But every year you grow, you will find me bigger

And that's what John is trying to communicate in these **final few verses** of John!

Even **if we could** get to the **surface** of knowing Him – John is saying there's **always more** for us to discover!

There's always more for us to know!

Always more to love!

Always more to worship!

A Divine Invitation

And so I said at the beginning of this sermon we began this series **1484 days** ago – 35,616 **hours**... and we've taken **many long breaks** in between those days!

People have had babies – couples have been married – friendships have been made – members have been added!

But the **bottom line** of the Gospel of John – the main thread throughout his Gospel:

Has **NOT been edited!**

It has **NOT been changed!**

This Gospel is a **divine invitation** into the fullness and joy of eternal life found in the Son of God!

And what Jesus has done **all throughout this Gospel** is show Himself to be the fullness of **EVERYTHING** our hearts have ever desired!

In every possible way friends **Jesus is the fulfillment** of life's greatest needs!

He is the fullness of the Father!

The fullness of the Son!

The fullness of eternity!

The fullness of His grace!

The fullness of forgiveness!

The fullness of humanity!

He's the better wine!

The better bread!

The better water!

The better joy!

The better peace!

The better Law!

The fullness of the Gospel!

In every single way possible... He's the **fullness of Him** who fills **all things in every way:**

He's the better bread

The better temple

The better wine

The Better David!

The better Moses!

The better Shepherd!

The Better King!

The Better Saviour!

Frustration

And so how do you end such a gloriously amazing passage of Scripture that seems to go on and on forever and ever and ever...?!?!?

I was chatting to Rob in the office this week trying to come up with a **title** that would **satisfy the main themes** of this passage in a way that John would approve of – and I sat there for maybe **20 minutes** just trying to word and re-word and reword and finally I said:

I'm just gonna go with this...

And I imagine that's probably how John was feeling as he came to the end of his Gospel trying to **plumb the depths** of this infinite Christ – and finally he just says:

Well there's NOT enough books...there's not enough time!

*I'll give me account **but man** there's so much more to say!*

There's so much more to see – so much more to worship – so much more to enjoy!

The end is only just the beginning...

The end is only the beginning!

The Last Battle

I know I've quoted a lot of Lewis here this morning – but let me finish with just **one more quote** that I think **gets to the heart** of what John is saying here in verse 25:

And this begins to scratch the surface...

The Last Battle is the **final book**, in the **final section**, of the **final chapter** in the Chronicles of Narnia – and Lewis is wrapping things up in a way that you start to feel sad about the story coming to an end...

And in **the final chapter** titled *Farewell to Shadowlands* Lewis writes this:

*The things that began to happen after that were **so great and beautiful** that I cannot write them down. And **for us** this is the end of all stories, and we can **most truly say** that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was **only the beginning** of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia **had only been** the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: and **in which** every chapter **is better than** the one before it!*

Every chapter is **better** than the one before it!

Friends **this** is what it means to know and love Jesus Christ!

An **ever increasing** – ever **expanding** – always **rising** – never **ending** – **unrelenting JOY & happiness in the presence of this God!**

Conclusion

And so how do you end such a **gloriously good & amazingly rich** passage of Scripture in the **greatest story** ever to have been written in the history of humanity ...?!?!

And it's simply this:

COME TO JESUS CHRIST!!!

COME TO THE ONE WHO IS LONGING TO LOVE YOU AND TO SHOW YOU HIS GRACE!

THE GREATEST PLEASURES!

THE TRUEST JOYS!

THE HIGHEST MERCIES – THE GREATEST LOVE IS WAITING FOR YOU AT THE FOOT OF HIS CROSS!

COME TO JESUS CHRIST – HAVE YOUR SINS FORGIVEN – AND ENTER INTO THE
GREATEST STORY THAT WILL NEVER FAIL!

Gospel

Friends the Good News of the Gospel is the **joyful declaration** that God is redeeming the world in
Jesus Christ!

It is to know that outside of Jesus Christ **each and everyone of us** have sinned against a holy God –
breaking His laws and hating His rules!

And the penalty for our sin is eternal death and punishment in hell forever!

But the greatest mercy is to know that God sent forth His Son – born of a virgin – born of the Spirit –
born under the Law – to redeem us from the law – and:

To set His people free!

And Jesus came and lived the life we could NOT live – and died the death we could NOT die – and
He takes our sin on His cross and we get His righteousness given to our account so that:

God the Father looks at you as though YOU HAD NEVER SINNED!

And on the third day, Christ rose **bodily from the grave** and now reigns in heaven and is now ruling
and reigning and putting all enemies under His feet!

And the good news of the Gospel is that **anyone who repents** and comes to Jesus Christ – **trusting
solely** in His grace **has eternal life!**

And you can be **free** – and you can be **forgiven solely on** the basis of what Jesus has done for you!

That's the good news of this gospel – and that's the story of John's entire Gospel!

Come Home

And so here's how we're going to finish today's sermon... I'm gonna ask in a few moments that you **please stand with me** and we're gonna sing together a song that's an invitation to come to Christ! It's just **one verse** from a song that we sung a few weeks ago called:

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling!

And if you **don't know** it **that's okay** you just stand there and listen... but if you know it then please sing...

And then **I'm gonna pray** – and then the musicians will come and close us with our final song...

Now in hindsight I probably should have just picked *softly and tenderly* – but it was **too late** in the week – I didn't want to upset the musicians... so we're gonna do this...

So if you're able would you **please stand** with me now and let's sing this verse/ and chorus together – the lyrics are gonna be up on the screen:

*Why should we tarry when Jesus is **pleading**,
pleading for you and for me?
Why should we **linger** and heed not His **mercies**,
mercies for you and for me? [Refrain]*

Refrain:

*Come home, come home;
ye who are weary come home;
earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, O sinner, come home!*

I think that was **the tone** that John was using as he came to the end of the story...

Would you please pray with me.

John 21:20-25

Discussion Questions

[Read John 21:20-25].

Main Point: *Whatever the future may bring in our lives as Christians we must ultimately keep our eyes fixed on following the One who is more wonderful than we can ever know...*

Q1. Coming to the end of John's Gospel – how would you summarise the entire book? – What is your favourite chapter/verse of John and why?

Q2. [Read verses 20-23]. What's the significance of John referring to himself as the *disciple whom Jesus loved*? – What evidence do we have of John and Jesus' relationship throughout this Gospel? [See **John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20**]. – Why do you think love is such a big theme for John?

Q3. Why do you think Peter was so concerned about John's future? – How does Jesus' response in verse 22 shift Peter's focus? – How does this passage challenge you to focus on your personal walk with Christ rather than comparing yourself to others?

Q4. What does Jesus' statement to Peter (*If I want him to remain until I come*) teach us about God's sovereignty in life and death? – What does it teach us about His second coming? – How does this passage help us trust God's unique calling for our own lives?

Q5. [Read verses 24-25]. Why is it significant that John affirms, "*We know that his testimony is true*"? – How does this statement strengthen our confidence in the Gospel's authenticity?

Q6. What does John mean when he says “*the world itself could not contain the books that would be written about Jesus?*” – Do you often find yourself frustrated when trying to come to the depths of who Jesus is?

Q7. In searching your own heart – how close to Christ are you in your personal walk?
– What things can we be praying for to help you follow Christ better? – Take some time to pray with a brother/sister in Christ about keeping your eyes fixed on following Jesus.