

# Jesus - the True and Better "I AM"

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[ 0 : 00 ] The scripture reading comes from John chapter 7 and 8 this week. In chapter 7, verse 37, we read, On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowd, Anyone who is thirsty may come to me. Anyone who believes in me may come and drink.

For the scriptures declare, rivers of living water will flow from his heart. When he said living water, he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him.

But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory. When the crowds heard him say this, some of them declared, Surely this man is the prophet we've been expecting.

Others said, he is the Messiah. Still others said, but he can be. Will the Messiah come from Galilee? For the scriptures clearly state that the Messiah will be born of the royal line of David in Bethlehem, the village where King David was born.

So the crowd was divided about him. Some even wanted him arrested, but no one laid a hand on him. Then in chapter 8, verse 31.

[ 1 : 24 ] Jesus said to the people who believed in him, You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

But we're descendants of Abraham, they said. We have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean you will be set free? And verse 48. The people retorted, You Samaritan devil!

Didn't we say all along that you were possessed by a demon? No, Jesus said. I have no demon in me. For I honor my father, and you dishonor me.

And though I have no wish to glorify myself, God is going to glorify me. He is the true judge. I tell you the truth. Anyone who obeys my teaching will never die.

The people said, Now we know you're possessed by a demon. Even Abraham and the prophets died. But you say, Anyone who obeys my teaching will never die.

[ 2 : 35 ] Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are? Jesus answered, If I won't glorify myself, It doesn't count.

But it is my father who will glorify me. You say, He is our God. But you don't even know him. I know him. If I said otherwise, I would be as great a liar as you.

But I do know him and obey him. Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad. The people said, You aren't even 50 years old.

How can you say you have seen Abraham? Jesus answered, I tell you the truth. Before Abraham was even born, I am.

At that point, they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden from them and left the temple. This is the word of God. Great.

[ 3 : 45 ] Ellen, thank you so much for reading for us this morning. And good morning, everybody. It is good to see you, to see so many faces, to see a couple of people from different parts of the world.

I see Amy Darlingan from New Zealand and a couple of others. And of course, those of us in Hong Kong, great to see you as well. I wish we could see you face to face. But hopefully, we will do that sometime in the coming weeks and months.

For the last 2,000 years, Jesus of Nazareth has provoked a lot of curiosity, fascination, for some people, anger, maybe even hatred, certainly a lot of intrigue.

About 100 years after Jesus was born and died and raised again, there was a Jewish historian by the name of Flavius Josephus. And he wrote this.

He said, There was this man called Jesus, a very wise man, if indeed you should call him a man. He was one who performed surprising deeds. He was a teacher of great truth. He won over many

Jews and Greeks.

[ 4 : 47 ] Was he possibly the Christ, the Messiah? And a little closer to our time in India, Mahatma Gandhi, the great revolutionary leader of India, he wrote this.

He said, I like your Christ, but you Christians, I'm not so sure about you. He said, I've not been able to move beyond the belief that Jesus was one of the greatest teachers of mankind.

And then even more recently, not sure if you'd call him a theologian, but John Lennon, the leader of the British pop band, The Beatles, he said, Christianity will disappear.

It will vanish and shrink. I don't even need to argue about it. I'm right and I will be proved right. I am more popular than Jesus Christ. In fact, later on, John Lennon, in one of his drug-induced states, was convinced that he was Jesus Christ for a couple of days and tried to convince his band members of the same.

Lots of different opinions about who was this man, Jesus of Galilee. But what did Jesus himself say? Who did he claim to be? Well, this morning, we are joining with hundreds of churches across Hong Kong, today and for the next six weeks, and we're going to be looking at these seven statements that Jesus makes in the Gospels about his identity, about who he is, and why he came to earth.

[ 6 : 06 ] And so we start in the series called I Am. Seven things that Jesus says that he is. And we start off with this pretty difficult passage today in John 8 that Ellen read to us.

It's quite tricky, and the passage in particular that we're going to look at comes at the end of this long dialogue, this conversation that Jesus has with a bunch of Jewish people in Jerusalem around the year 31 AD.

But the passage, actually the context, starts back in chapter 7. And I'll explain something of what's going on here. Around this time, the Jewish people were gathered in Jerusalem for what was known as the Feast of the Tabernacles.

It was an annual celebration. It was seven days long. Every year, in the seventh month of the year, hundreds of thousands of people would gather in Jerusalem to celebrate Israel's pilgrimage coming out of Egypt, wandering through the wilderness for 40 years, and eventually ending up in the promised land, the land of rest.

And so every year, they would gather to celebrate this pilgrimage journey. And if you know the Old Testament, you'll remember that really, the nation of Israel, the people of God, are formed after the Exodus.

[ 7 : 18 ] Up until that point, Israel, or the people of God, are really the families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But after the Exodus, when they leave Egypt, they become the nation of Israel and the people of God.

And you'll remember, of course, how they leave Egypt. They are slaves there. They are oppressed by Pharaoh and his armies. And one day, they're crying out to God for years and years and years, and God calls a man called Moses to be the great deliverer and the redeemer.

And he calls Moses, and he says, he reveals himself to Moses at a burning bush out of the wilderness. And he tells Moses to go to Pharaoh and to tell Pharaoh that God says Pharaoh must let his people go.

And Moses is not so sure about this. And Moses says, okay, but who must I say that you are? I mean, what's your name? What God are you?

The problem is that the Egyptians are polytheistic. They worship all sorts of gods. There's the God of the sun and the moon and the stars. There's the God of the cattle, the God of the crops, the God of the Nile River.

[ 8 : 22 ] There are all sorts of gods. And so Moses says, if I go to Pharaoh and says, God says let his people go, he's going to say, which God? Who are you talking about? Why should I listen to that God?

Who are you? What is your name? And God answers Moses with this very unusual and strange name. He gives himself the name I am.

He says, tell Pharaoh, I am. He says, let my people go. I am. What does that mean? In Hebrew, you would say Yahweh.

And what it means is that I am the eternally sovereign, unconstrained God. I am the God that has no limitations and no constraints.

I have no beginning. I have no end. I am not just the God of Israel or the God of Egypt. I am not the God of a certain geography. I am not the God of a certain time in history.

[ 9 : 21 ] I am not just the God of a certain people. I am the eternal, uncreated, sovereign God. I am the supreme being of all beings.

I am simply I am. Anything you put in there to define me is a constraint on who I am. I am simply I am.

And if you know the story of the Exodus, Moses goes back to Egypt and Pharaoh doesn't want to release the Israelites and God, by many miraculous interventions, delivers His people from slavery and sets them free.

And they enter into the wilderness and eventually they enter into the promised land. And while they're traveling in the wilderness for these 40 years, God miraculously provides for them again and again.

When they run out of water, He provides water for them. When they run out of food, He gives them food from heaven. When they are walking through the desert and it's baking hot, there's a cloud that covers them. At night, when there's darkness all around them, He provides a light.

[ 10 : 21 ] God provides them and leads them through the wilderness until they get to the place of rest. Now, fast forward 1,500 years. It's Jerusalem.

And the Jewish people have come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. God's kindness and God's provision. The fact that God is with His people throughout this journey from Egypt into the wilderness and into the promised land.

And every year there's great excitement but this year in particular there's a buzz in the air. And there's a buzz in the air because everybody's wondering, is that man we've been hearing about, Jesus of Nazareth, is He going to be there?

That's what's on everyone's lips. Is Jesus of Galilee going to arrive and be there? And they're wondering. So look at chapter 7 verse 12. It says this, The Jews were looking for Him at the feast and saying, Where is He?

And there was much muttering about Him among the people. While some said, He's a good man, others said, No, no, He's leading people astray. And so, there's all this anticipation. Is Jesus here?

[ 11 : 25 ] Who is He? What is He on about? Is He the Christ? Is He the Messiah? And as Jesus goes up to Jerusalem, at first He stays back, He hangs in the shadows but eventually He goes to the temple and He starts teaching and He gathers a crowd around Him.

And if you look at what Jesus says, throughout this teaching, He's picking up on all the signs and all the symbols that the Jews were celebrating during the Feast of Tabernacles and He's saying, You think these are signs showing you how God was with your fathers in the wilderness?

Don't you see these are all shadows? They are real signs and wonders. Point to me. Point to me. Look at what He says here. Do you remember how Israel got water in the wilderness when they left Egypt?

God opened up a rock and from it sprang living water so to feed them water in the wilderness? Well, look at what Jesus says in chapter 7. If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, as the Scriptures have said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Do you remember how the Israelites when they're walking through the wilderness at night time, it's dark, they don't know where to go and what does God do?

[ 12 : 31 ] He provides a light for them to shine in the darkness. Well, look at what Jesus says in chapter 8. I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

And remember the whole point of the Exodus was when God delivers people, He sets them free. They are slaves in Egypt. They are in bondage and He sets them free.

Well, look at what Jesus says in chapter 8, verse 31. If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples. You will know the truth and the truth will set you free. You see what Jesus is doing here? He's pointing to all the things that the Jews were celebrating about God's faithfulness to them in the wilderness and He's saying, if you really want to know that God has not abandoned you, that God is with you, look to me.

Look to me. And that's why there's so much division going on here. Some are astounded, some are rejoicing, some are trusting that the promised Messiah has come, but to others, Jesus' words sound awfully blasphemous.

[ 13 : 32 ] It sounds like He's saying that He is God. And so, look at their response. Look at verse 48 with me and we come to the passage that Ellen read to us. Verse 48.

It says, the Jews answered Him, are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and you have a demon? In other words, Jesus, you've lost your mind. You've completely lost the plot now.

To use C.S. Lewis' famous words, they're saying, either you're a lunatic or you are a liar. Right?

That's what they mean by a demon or a Samaritan. Either lunatic or you are a liar. But Jesus isn't finished revealing Himself because He wants to help them see who He really is.

And so, look what He says. Jesus says four things in this passage. We'll look at them very quickly. Four things that really rile His audience. The first thing He says, He says, God the Father, the one that you know as Yahweh, He and I are totally aligned.

One and the same heart. Look at how He says this twice in verse 49. He says, I do not have a demon but I honor my Father. I do not seek my own glory. There is one, the Father, who seeks it and He is the judge.

[ 14 : 41 ] Again, in verse 54, He says, if I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It's my Father who glorifies me. The one that you say He is our God. Jesus is saying that God the Father, Yahweh, actually glorifies me, exalts me, lifts me up.

If you know how jealous Jewish people were of God's glory, Jesus is saying a radical thing.

Remember in Isaiah 43, God says, I am God, there is no other.

I am God, I give my glory to none other. He has Jesus saying, no, no, no, that God, He actually does give His glory to me. He will glorify me.

Notice the second thing Jesus says. Look at verse 51. He says, truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death. Now, all Jews knew that in the Old Testament, God's word was almost equated with God Himself.

In Psalm 27, it says, the word of the Lord breaks the cedars. Then the next line says, the Lord breaks the cedars. The word of the Lord sets captives free.

[ 15 : 47 ] the Lord sets captives free. In other words, God's word is so closely aligned with what God does that it's almost, almost synonymous with God.

But Jews also know that God's word in the Old Testament is the one that creates life and pushes back death. Remember, that's the problem with Saul, right? In the book of 1 Samuel, he's constantly rejecting God's word and his life spirals downhill, downhill, downhill until he's one foot in the grave and he is the walking dead.

Remember how Scripture says that the world was created? God spoke the world into being. That's not a technical scientific term about how old the world is or how the world came into being exactly. The point is it's saying God's word creates life. Look what Jesus says here. Jesus says the same thing. If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.

Jesus is equating himself with the God of the Old Testament. Jesus is saying that if you keep my word, if you honor it, if you respect it, if you cleave to it, if you live within it, if you surrender it, you'll be so infused with life.

[ 16 : 56 ] Life in the midst of darkness, life in the midst of hopelessness, life in the midst of this broken world. My life will come and reside within you. But look at the third thing Jesus says here in verse 56.

He says, your father Abraham rejoiced at the prospect of seeing my day, of seeing me come and arrive. He was glad and he rejoiced at it. And what he means by that is when God, the father Yahweh, made a great promise to Abraham that through your descendants, one of your sons will bless the whole world, not just Israel, not just the Jews, the whole world will be blessed through the coming of one of your descendants.

Abraham rejoiced at the prospect, the coming of a Messiah, a king who would bring hope to the midst of hopelessness, peace in the midst of a broken world, light in the midst of darkness, joy in the midst of pain.

And he rejoiced at the prospect that a Messiah king would come. And Jesus says, he would rejoice at the coming of my day. He saw it and he was glad.

Now, the people around Jesus, they hear all this and they're taking Jesus very literally. They don't really understand what he's saying. They say, hang on, hang on. Abraham died 2,000 years ago. How can you say that he saw you?

[ 18 : 09 ] How do you know when he rejoiced at? How do you know what is going on in his heart? Have you seen Abraham? You're not even 50 years old. And that leads to Jesus' fourth and final thing he says here. It's truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was even born, before he was even brought into existence, I am.

I am. Do you see what Jesus is saying? Jesus has been building up the tension, building up the tension, giving more and more clues and more and more hints as to who he is and finally he drops this bombshell statement, the ultimate mic drop of Jesus.

He takes upon himself the self-relevatory name of Jesus, the name that God gave to Moses at the burning bush, the name that, where God says, I am the eternal, sovereign, uncreated one.

I am, simply I am. With no constraints, no limits, I am the supreme being of all beings. I am who I am. When the Jews finally say, who are you?

When they press him, Jesus says, before even the greatest religious leaders in the world, before Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, before Moses gave you anything, I am.

[ 19 : 26 ] I existed. Before your father, Abraham, even came onto the radar, I've always been there. I am the eternal, sovereign, and created one.

And of course, the response from those listening, they know exactly what he said. They know exactly what he means. And so what do they do? They pick up the stones around him to stone him to death.

Jesus makes a remarkable claim here. He's not just a great teacher, not just a moral religious leader, he's not just a miracle worker, he's not just a philosopher, he's not someone who's just come to give us good advice to how to live our lives.

Jesus Christ claims to be none other than Yahweh, the eternal, sovereign, and created one. Well, what does this mean for us today?

That's wonderful that Jesus says this 2,000 years ago. What does it mean for us today? Well, I want us to very quickly just notice five things, mainly from this passage, that we have to come to terms with if we're going to make sense of Jesus Christ at all and his claims.

[ 20 : 38 ] And five things, we'll run through them very quickly. The data, the consistency of Jesus, the claims of Jesus, the security of Jesus, and finally, the promise of Jesus. So, firstly, let's look at the data.

One of the things that we can easily do and misunderstand who Jesus is, is by simply misunderstanding the data that's available. I don't know if you noticed the first passage of Scripture that Ellen read to us this morning, back in chapter 7, it says this, it says, some people said, this is the prophet.

Others said, this is the Christ. But some said, isn't, is the Christ that comes from Galilee hasn't the Scripture told us that the Christ comes from the offspring of David and therefore comes from Bethlehem?

So, there's a division among the people over him. So, some people are looking at Jesus and they're astounded by his teaching, they're astounded by his words, they're astounded by the impact and the influence he's had in history and they're thinking, surely this is the Christ.

But the others that say, yeah, it looks like the Christ, but there's a problem. The Scriptures have told us that the Christ must be born in Bethlehem. But we've all heard this guy comes from Galilee, so they write him off.

[ 21 : 50 ] Do you see how they write him off? They say, he can't be the Christ because they haven't done their homework. They haven't gone to the source material. If you know the Christmas story at all, you know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but Herod wanted to persecute him and so his family fled from Bethlehem down to Egypt and a few years later returned to Galilee and he grew up in Galilee.

But here are some people that they're writing off Christ the Messiah simply because they haven't done their homework. They haven't gone to the source material. They're relying on second-hand information about him.

Now friends, if you're a spiritual seeker this morning, have you made the same mistake? Maybe you find yourself interested in faith and Jesus and religion. You've read a couple of books. You've read, you know, Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins.

You've read Jonathan Haight or Jordan Peterson. You've read some stuff about faith and science and you think, ah, it can't be. It can't be. Friends, don't make the same mistake that these people

did.

Here are some people and they're writing off the most influential, the most astounding human being who has ever lived because they don't go to the source material. They've heard second-hand information.

[ 23 : 00 ] Friends, if you're not a Christian this morning, you've got to go to the source material. You've got to read the Gospels for yourself. You've got to go and see who does Jesus say that he is. Find out what he says about himself.

Don't miss Jesus because you misunderstand the data. Secondly, the consistency of Jesus. Now, you could say the integrity and not, I don't, by that I don't mean the moral integrity of Jesus. I mean the, the integrated wholeness of the New Testament and the Old Testament. The consistency of the claims of who God is between the Old and New. You know, some people say, I like Jesus, I like his teachings about turning the other cheek and forgiving your enemies and loving those who persecute you and all that stuff.

But all that stuff in the Old Testament about God and enemies and people dying, I don't know, I don't know about that. Surely the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are two separate gods.

I can follow the God of the New Testament but the God of the Old Testament, I'm not so sure about that. Friends, you see what Jesus Christ is saying here? He says that you can't make that distinction.

[ 24 : 06 ] Jesus doesn't allow us to make that dichotomy. Jesus says that the same God who overcame the Egyptians through the blood of many lambs is the same God who will overcome our great enemy through the blood of the Lamb, Christ, the one who died on the cross.

Jesus says that the same one, the same great I am, the one who says, I am who I am, who commanded his people to take out their enemies so they could enter into their rest is the same great I am who will take out our great enemy as he dies on the cross and we can enter the rest of salvation.

Friends, Jesus says that the same God who demands holiness and obedience in the Old Testament and the one whose temple is resplendent with glory and holiness is the same great I am who one day every knee will bow down before when we see him in his glory.

Jesus says that the I am of the Old Testament is the same great I am for whom we will worship and adore in heaven. It's the same God.

It's one and the same. The consistency of Jesus. Jesus doesn't allow us to dichotomize and to place him in a box and say, I'll take this aspect of you but not that. Jesus is the consistent one.

[ 25 : 21 ] Notice thirdly here, the claims of Jesus. The claims of Jesus. Now, as we go back and look at this passage and the rest of John's Gospel, one of the things we see is that the entire narrative arc of the whole Scripture focuses in on the person of Jesus Christ and his claims.

Go back and look at the four things that Jesus says about himself in this passage. He says, I honor my Father and my Father honors me. If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death. Jesus says, Abraham rejoiced at my day.

He saw it and was glad. Finally, he says, I am the great I am. I am Yahweh. And it's not just in this passage. In fact, every passage in the Scriptures, particularly in the Gospels, Jesus is going to say the same thing about himself.

He's going to say, it's all about me. Look at Luke chapter 4. This is a famous passage when Jesus starts out his ministry. He says, he comes to the temple and he gets the scroll of Isaiah the prophet and he opens it up at Isaiah 61 and he says this, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. To set at liberty those that are oppressed and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. And at the end of that, Jesus gives the scroll back to the attendant.

[ 26 : 41 ] He sits down and he says, Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. Jesus says that the whole Old Testament is actually pointing towards him. He's saying that God's word, the Scriptures, is not good advice about how to live your lives.

It's not good motivation. It's not just good teaching. It's a proclamation of good news that Jesus is the Messiah King. Do you see that? And this is one of the remarkable things about Jesus.

Jesus stands apart from every other founder of world religion because he says it's all about me. Every other founder of the world religion says, Don't look to me. Don't worship me. Follow my teachings.

Follow my Dharma. Do you remember what Gautama Buddha said on his deathbed? He's dying. He turns to his disciples and he says, Let my Dharma and the disciplines that I've taught you be your teacher.

See what he's saying? He's saying, Don't follow me. Don't worship me. But follow my teachings. Follow the disciplines that I've taught you. Muhammad said the same thing. He said, Don't follow me. Don't worship me.

[ 27 : 41 ] Follow the words that I give you. But Jesus Christ stands alone from every founder in the world religion and he says, If you follow my teachings, if you follow my wisdom, if you follow my words apart from me, it's meaningless.

You have to come to me. Remember, Jesus says the same thing in Matthew 11. He says, Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you. Learn from me. I am gentle and lowly in heart. You will find rest for your souls. My yoke is easy. My burden is light. Jesus makes this remarkable claim that you can search the scriptures and be an expert in religious study.

You can know the scriptures backwards. You can seek to follow everything the scriptures say, but if you do not come to him, you miss it all completely. The radical claims of Jesus. Notice fourthly what Jesus says here, the security of Jesus.

Now, one of the problems that many people raise against Christianity is that you say, Jesus Christ must have been one of the most insecure, self-centered people to have ever lived if he needed all this praise and worship.

[ 28 : 51 ] Right? Michael Prowse was a columnist, American columnist for the Financial Times of London. And he turned away from his faith because he said, only tyrants puffed up with pride crave adulation and approval.

Right? C.S. Lewis, before he became a Christian, he complained that God's demand to be praised and worship sounded like a vain woman who wants compliments. The words of C.S. Lewis in the 1940s.

But look at what Jesus says here. Jesus doesn't need our praise and our worship. He doesn't need anyone's glory or honor. The people of his day are mocking him. Soon they're going to spit on him. They're going to smash a crown of thorns into his head. They're going to write him off as a lunatic, as a renegade. They're going to crucify him. And Jesus is not perturbed.

And the reason is because he says, I didn't come for people's approval. I came to seek and to save the lost, to lay down my life as a ransom for many. Jesus Christ, look what he says here in verse 50.

[ 29 : 56 ] He says, I do not seek my own glory. There's one who seeks it and he gives it to me. He is the judge. Verse 54. If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It's the Father who glorifies me.

Jesus Christ is the most secure man who ever lived. Do you remember what Philippians 2 says? It says, even though he was God, he equated equality with God, something not to be grasped.

Jesus had it all and he gave it all up. He rather took on the nature of a servant, humbled himself to the point of death, to rescue and ransom people like us who need him.

Jesus Christ, the most secure man who ever lived because he had all the affirmation within the Trinity. He had the approval of God himself. And so why does God command us to worship and adore?

I mean, you're saying, Jesus doesn't need our worship, Kevin? Okay, so why should we worship him? Why does God command us to come before him and to praise him, to tell him that he's the greatest, that there's no one like him, that he is God and that there is no other?

[ 30 : 57 ] Why do we sing songs and glorify his name, declare that he is God? Why do we do these things if Jesus doesn't need it? And the answer is, not because he needs it, but because we need it.

John Calvin said that the human heart is an idle factory, always creating things to clasp and to deify and to worship. Things in which to find our significance, our security and our fulfillment.

Friends, you see, Jesus calls us to worship and adore him, not because he needs it, but because we need it, because he's calling us to set us free from the false gods that promise the world but only enslave us.

Jesus doesn't need our worship. He has all the security and the significance in the whole world. He has all the fulfillment in the world. He's God. But he calls us to worship him because we need to bring our lives to him and to truly be set free.

And then notice, finally and fifthly, the last thing is, notice the promise of Jesus. Look again at verse 51. Jesus gives this remarkable promise. He says, Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.

[ 32 : 08 ] Jesus makes a promise that all who come to him will experience fullness of life and life in abundance. Jesus is making the statement about his divinity. Yes, that's true. Jesus is equating himself with God, with Yahweh, the great I am.

That's true. But Jesus is making more than a statement here. He's also making a promise. He's making a promise that those that feel hopeless can come and find hope in him. He's making a promise that those who feel restless can come and find their rest in him.

He's making a promise that those who feel like they're grasping in the dark, trying to make sense of life, not sure where to go and how to get through the entanglements of life can come to him to find light and to find life.

And the word that Jesus uses in the, the word that Jesus and John use in his gospel, one of the most common words he uses is that everlasting life, eternal life. Jesus came and said, I've come to give you eternal life.

And when John and Jesus use that word, he's not just talking about one, when we die, we'll experience life, although that is true. What he's talking about is the life of heaven, the life that Adam and Eve were meant to experience in the garden of Eden is infused into our life even now as we live.

[ 33 : 18 ] What Jesus means by that is a life fueled by hope and courage and confidence, a life that's free of shame and despair and guilt, a life that is marked by peace, the kind of life you can only dream and hope that heaven will be made of.

Jesus says that I will come and give that kind of life to those who follow me and trust me. Jesus doesn't just say that those who trust him won't die of cancer or COVID or something else.

He's saying that when death comes knocking at our door, it'll be a transition from one form of life into the next. Well, these are the claims of Jesus.

And so the people of Jesus' day, they know that they may not have known who Jesus was, but they knew one thing for certain. They knew that Jesus' words demand a response. They knew that those kind of words, you can't remain neutral.

And so what do they do? They pick up the stones around them to stone him to death. Jesus knows that his words don't allow you just to give him a simple applaud and say, nice sermon, teacher.

[ 34 : 23 ] Jesus' words don't allow us just to nod our head and say, very interesting. Jesus says that either you take him as word, you take him as what he claims to be, and therefore you never taste death, or along with the crowd in today's passage, you reject him as a lunatic, you reject him as a liar, and you reject him as someone worthy of death.

But Jesus doesn't allow us to be neutral. He doesn't give us that option. He says, come and see me for who I really am.