

I John 5:6-12 - Who do you say that I am?

To Read:

John 3

Luke 1:26-38

Luke 3:15-38

I. Introduction

(Ruben's Mom: San Maharjan Shretha)

A. This morning, we're going to continue in I John 5, looking at verses 6-12

1. For a long time, these verses were some of the most confusing verses in the Bible to me
2. Verses 6-8 especially seem completely disconnected from the flow of John's thought, and, on top of that, they are completely confusing - what does John mean when he's talking about water and blood and the Spirit?
3. I memorized I John about a year and a half ago, and, as I meditated on these verses in my head, I kept throwing my hands up in the air because I had no idea what John was trying to tell me - I don't know if any of you have ever felt this way about these verses before
4. But, this morning, what I want to do is show that these verses actually make a lot of sense and, far from being disconnected from John's thought here, they are completely necessary to John's argument
5. These verses don't hold some sort of mystical knowledge that we have to penetrate, but are simple, straightforward facts that John points us to

B. To understand these verses, though, we need to start by figuring out what question John is trying to answer

1. To do this, we can go back to the last five verses - the verses we talked about last week
2. Last week, we saw that John made two promises that were centered on faith in Jesus Christ, and he showed us what this faith looked like - faith is unified with love, obedience and joy - a faith that takes holds of John's promises is a loving faith, an obedient love and a joyful obedience
3. But, in the end, love, obedience and joy are fruits of faith, not the object of faith - we don't believe by trying to love more, or obey more or have more joy - we love more and obey more and have more joy because we believe
4. But what do we believe? This was the beginning and end of John's argument last week: We believe in Jesus - Jesus is the object of our faith - faith produces a union with Jesus the victorious conquer that leads us to victory
5. But faith that grasps on to Jesus in a way that produces victory is faith that accepts Jesus for who He says He is - faith is believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

C. So, now, John is going to answer the question: Why should we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?

1. Why should we accept Jesus for who He says He is? Jesus has claimed that He is fully man and fully God, but why would we ever believe such an outrageous claim?
2. The gnostics, the false teachers that John is responding to in his letter, did not believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God - they believed that Jesus was only a man and that the divine Christ, the Son of God descended on Him at His baptism and left Him before the crucifixion - Jesus was not fully God and fully man
3. The gnostics believed that Jesus came by birth, a human man, born of our blood line, but Christ came by water, in baptism and never shared human nature, never humbled Himself and became a man
4. But, John says, 'no', Jesus did not come by the water only, but by the water, and the blood - and John is going to give us three reasons for believing that Jesus is who He says He is - He is the Christ, the Son of God
5. And, as we study this passage together, the question John wants to leave us with is the same question that Jesus asked the disciples in Matthew 16:15 - *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"*
6. Peter answered correctly in verse 16 - *Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*
7. When we are confronted with Christ, will we answer like Peter? Do we accept Jesus for who He says He is?

D. I John 5:6-12 - ⁶*This is he who came by water and blood---Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷For there are three that testify: ⁸the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. ⁹If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. ¹⁰Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

E. So John gives us three reasons to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and this will be our outline this morning

1. We should believe because the testimony is clear
2. We should believe because the testimony is divine
3. We should believe because the testimony is life

II. The testimony is clear

I John 5:6-8 - *⁶This is he who came by water and blood---Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷For there are three that testify: ⁸the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.*

A. The curious verses that open our passage this morning actually become very simple when we put them in context in John's letter and against the background of John's letter

1. There has been a split in the church, the gnostics have left the church and claim that Jesus and Christ are two separate people, one human and one divine, and John sees the fatal error of this belief
2. So, John writes to the churches under his care and he wants them to believe that Jesus is the Christ, He is the Son of God and the Son of Man at the same time, He is fully God and fully man, He is God incarnate, He is Emmanuel, God with us - the incarnation isn't something that can be set aside, it is at the center of our faith
3. In chapter 5, John directly addresses the gnostics - the gnostics said the human Jesus was filled with the divine Christ, so Jesus Christ only appeared at baptism - Jesus Christ came by water, but not by birth, not by blood
4. So, when John asks the question in verse 5, that we looked at last week, " Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" John doubles down and makes it clear that the gnostics are wrong
5. Jesus Christ didn't come by the water only, there wasn't a new mystical union performed at Jesus' baptism, Jesus Christ came by water and blood - He was born the incarnate Son of God and He was the incarnate Son of God at His baptism

B. But, how do we know this? Because the Holy Spirit has testified to it, and the Holy Spirit always tells the truth

1. This was actually a point of agreement with the gnostics, both John and the gnostics agreed that the Holy Spirit revealed truth, the gnostics just claimed to have a fuller share of the Spirit and therefore to have hidden knowledge, which is where their name comes from - gnostic means knowledge
2. The gnostics celebrated the fact that the Spirit of God descended on Jesus at His baptism, as it says in Matthew 3:16-17 - *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*
3. The gnostics would point at this and say, 'this proves our point, the Spirit descended on Jesus at baptism'
4. But John puts a question to the gnostics, 'is this really what the Spirit of Truth has testified to?' 'Did you forget that the Spirit of Truth that testified at Jesus' baptism is the same Spirit that testified at Jesus birth?'
5. Luke 1:30-35 - *And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy---the Son of God.*
6. The same Spirit that testified at Jesus' baptism is the Spirit that overshadowed Jesus' conception, the Spirit that called Jesus the Son of God at His baptism is the same Spirit that called Jesus the Son of God at His birth

C. So, there are three that testify - the Spirit, the water and the blood, and these three agree

1. The birth of Jesus, the supernatural conception but extremely natural birth, testify that Jesus is both the Son of God and the Son of Man
2. The baptism of Jesus, as Jesus took part in the human ceremony washing but, at the same time, the Spirit of God descended on Him, testified that Jesus is both the Son of God and the Son of Man
3. And the Spirit gave direct testimony at both events that Jesus was both the Son of God and the Son of Man
4. The testimony is clear and irrefutable - there is no room for other interpretations - Jesus is either the Son of God and the Son of Man, Jesus is the incarnate God or everything is a lie
5. We can't join the gnostics and claim that Jesus and Christ were separate beings, we can't join the modernists that called Jesus a good teacher, we can't join the postmodernists and say that Jesus was an enlightened man
6. The Spirit of Truth has been very clear - Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man, the testimony is clear
7. So, we must accept Jesus for who He says He is - He is the Christ, the Son of God

III. The testimony is divine

I John 5:9-10 - ⁹If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. ¹⁰Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.

A. In verse 9, John turns to a second, though related line of reasoning

1. John tells us we should believe that Jesus is the Son of God because the testimony is clear
2. But now, John adds that we should believe because the One who has testified is God Himself
3. The testimony is clear and it is divine - the testimony isn't confusing and it is completely authoritative

B. John starts by meditating on the nature of testimony

1. We allow people to testify all the time - whether it is in a legal sense when witness testify in a courtroom, or in a day to day sense when people tell us things that they have seen and know
2. And, in a general sense, we accept this testimony - we often believe what people tell us; if we don't have a reason to disbelieve them we accept their testimony - if they were there they should know what happened
3. But, if this is the case, that we often accept eyewitness testimony from people, then we have to accept that Jesus is who He says He is, because the eyewitness testimony to this truth doesn't come from merely people but from God Himself - the Spirit is the one who testifies because the Spirit is the Truth
4. God Himself is the One who has borne witness to who Jesus is - God said that Jesus was His Son from His birth, God said that Jesus was His Son at His baptism - God has always and only said that Jesus is His beloved Son
5. So, if we receive the testimony of men, we must accept God's testimony because the testimony of God is greater

C. This leaves us with only two options: first, we can believe what God has said

1. John deals with this in verse 10 - *Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself.*
2. We could take this statement to be a sort of tautological statement
 - a. Whoever believes has internalized the testimony - whoever believes has believed
 - b. And there is truth in this tautological statement - if we believe that Jesus is who He says He is, we have accepted God's witness, we have internalized His testimony about His Son, and we believe His testimony
3. But, I don't think this is all that John is saying, I think John is making a promise here as well
 - a. Remember that John has said that the Spirit is the one who testifies because the Spirit is the truth - there is a unity between the Spirit of God and the testimony about Jesus; we've discussed this several time in I John
 - b. So, if we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, we have the Spirit of Testimony abiding in us - we have the Testifier in ourselves - our belief that Jesus is the Son of God demonstrates that the Spirit is in us
 - c. It's the same promise that we meditated on last week - our faith has a source - if we believe that Jesus is who He says He is, it is because the Holy Spirit has come and dwelt with us, has changed our mind and our attitude toward Jesus so that we can grasp onto Him and share in the promises that He has won
4. And, on top of the promise, there is a directive as well
 - a. If you believe in the Son of God, you have the testimony inside of you, the Spirit indwells you as a testimony, and therefore you become a continuing testimony to Jesus
 - b. John points this out several times in his short letter - if we are filled with the Holy Spirit and believe in Jesus and live out the truths of Jesus in our lives, then we are a testimony to the world of who Jesus is
 - c. If we believe, we ought to testify - the Spirit dwells in us and through us testifies to the world who Jesus is

D. But, unfortunately, there is a second option, we can reject what God has said about His Son

1. John continues in verse 10 - *Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.*
2. Refusing to believe that Jesus is who He claims to be is no small matter - it is calling God a liar to His face
3. We can't have any positive relationship with God without accepting Christ through faith, because God testified
4. Those who reject God's testimony about Christ reject God entirely - in effect, they call God a liar, a God not worthy of following, of worshipping or obeying, they are cutting themselves off from God, they are making themselves an authority higher than God, they are rejecting everything that God has done in this world
5. Jesus isn't an optional path to God, Jesus isn't a bonus in our path to God, accepting Jesus for who He claims to be is the only way of meeting God because to do otherwise is to reject God to His face
6. The testimony is divine - the testimony comes from God Himself so we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God

IV. The testimony is life

I John 5:11-12 - ¹¹And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

A. In verse 13, the next verse in I John, John starts the close of His letter, so in verses 11 and 12, John concludes his argument, and He concludes with the most important reason to believe that Jesus is who He says He is

1. We should believe because the testimony is clear and divine, but most importantly, because the testimony is life
2. John is quite literally saying that how we view Jesus Christ is a life and death matter - if we get it right, we will share the life that Jesus Christ has, if we get it wrong we will be forever cut off from that life
3. In his last two reasons, John has defended, in a general sense, why it is important to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but now John gets personal and tells you why it is important for you as one individual to believe Jesus
4. If you believe, you will have life, if you don't believe you will not have life

B. To bring us to this truth, John brings us back to the incarnation

1. As I've said many times as we've gone through I John, the incarnation is at the center of John's theology - the fact that Jesus as God humbled Himself and became a man forms the foundation for everything John believes
2. Every promise that John grasps in Christ was realized in the incarnation of Jesus, especially the promise of life
3. Life belongs to God - God is the only being that has life in Himself, He lives based on His own power and authority, and God has the authority to give life to whom He will as we see demonstrated in Creation
4. God gave life to humanity in creation, God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, but Adam and Eve rejected God, they rejected His rule and therefore rejected and lost His life and were condemned to death
5. So, humanity no longer has any right to the life of God, each of us has rejected God and rejected life
6. And this is where the incarnation comes in - Jesus is God and He has life in Himself, as Jesus said in John 5:26 - *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.*
7. And, when Jesus became a man, He brought the life of God into human flesh again - He made a way for God's life to indwell men and women again because God's life dwelt in a man, Jesus Christ
8. And, as Jesus gave up His life, He made it so that we can now come and have His life - we have no right to God's life, we rejected God's life because we have rejected God and have only the expectation of judgment
9. But, because Jesus took flesh and became a man and because, as a man, He died a sinners death, we can come to Him and receive the life of God again
10. So, God has given us a great gift of life and this life is found in His Son - this life comes to us because Jesus came to earth as a man and died on earth as a sinner so that sinners can have life in Him
11. The incarnation is the promise of life - if God did not become a man then we have no hope of life

C. So, we should believe that Jesus is the Son of God, because we can only have life in Him if He is the Son of God

1. Jesus, the incarnate Son of God has brought life into this world and in His death offers that life to each of us
2. If we believe, we are saying that we want the life that Jesus brought into this world, the life that God joined to man in Jesus Christ, and, if we believe, we take hold of that life - the life that Christ brought into the world can belong to us if we come to Jesus because He wants to give it to all who would come
3. But, if we reject that Jesus is the Son of God, we are rejecting the life that Jesus brought into this world - we are saying that we don't need a supernatural infusion of God's life to descend into this world, we are denying that we ever lost the life of God, we are denying that life belongs to Jesus, and so we aren't taking hold of His life
4. If reject Jesus, we don't have life, John says it very clearly in His gospel in John 3:36 - *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*
5. If we reject who Jesus is, we don't receive God's gracious gift of life, we continue in our previous state having lost the life of God and waiting only for God's terrible judgment on our rejection of Him
6. Whether we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God is, quite literally, a matter of life and death - if, through faith, you grasp hold of Jesus Christ then He will freely give His life to you, but if you don't you have none of His life which means you have no life at all

V. Application - Who do you say that I am?

Matthew 16:13-19 - *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

A. As we try to apply our test this morning, we may run into a problem - I don't know that anyone here this morning is really tempted toward gnosticism, at least in their core belief set distinguishing between Jesus and the Christ

1. We might be tempted to ask, 'does this text apply to us?' But, the question still stands, 'who do you say that Jesus is?'
2. The gnostics rejected Jesus Christ, they refused to accept Him for who He said He was, they made up elaborate theories that would integrate their godless worldview with Jesus Christ - they substituted Jesus' claims for their own desires - they rejected Jesus Christ in favor of a straw man they created in their own image
3. We may not believe what the gnostics believed, but we can do the same things the gnostics did
4. We may not make up the same elaborate theories about Jesus Christ, but we can make up our own, we might not integrate the same godless worldview with Jesus, but we can integrate our own godless worldview, we may not reject Jesus for the same straw man, but we can reject Him for our own straw man made in our image
5. As we read our passage this morning, each one of us needs to answer this question: who do I say that Jesus is?

B. But, as I ask that question this morning, we need to realize that there are two halves to that question

1. We might call the first half the literal half - who do I literally say Jesus is?
 - a. Do I believe that Jesus is the Son of God?
 - b. Do I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the chosen and anointed One, appointed by God to do God's work?
 - c. Do I believe that Jesus Christ came in the flesh - that He is fully God and fully man so that He can represent me before God and can represent God to me?
 - d. Do I believe that Jesus Christ came to be my propitiation - to sacrifice Himself in my place to appease God's anger at my sin?
 - e. Do you believe that Jesus is who He says He is? If not, then you are calling God a liar, you have cut yourself off from the source of life, you have rejected God's great gift to us.
 - f. That is the first half: who do you say that Jesus is? Jesus asks you, "Who do you say that I am?"
2. But there's a second half, which we might call the practical half - what does my life say about what I believe?
 - a. It is never merely enough to say that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God - James would tell us that the demons know that, and they shudder - they have no joy in the fact
 - b. John has continually told us that believing something is not mere intellectual ascent, belief is much deeper than that - if we believe something we are going to act it out in our lives
 - c. So, if we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is fully God and fully Man, then that truth will affect our lives - if it doesn't, it means we don't truly believe it; it hasn't penetrated past our brain
 - d. If Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man, if He came by water and by blood, then Jesus Christ deserves certain things from us and, if we believe, we will give Him His due as the Son of Man and the Son of God

**C. So, I want to close this morning with, if Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man, what does He deserve from us?
Or, to rephrase, if Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man, what does belief look like?**

1. If Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man, He deserves our worship
 - a. Jesus, as the Son of God, has all the glory of God in Himself and, as the Son of Man, has brought that glory near to us so that we can see it, we can experience it, we can know it in ways we never could have
 - b. So, if we believe that Jesus is the Son of God and Son of Man, we must be moved to worship, even as the disciples worshipped in Matthew 14:33 - *And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."*
 - c. If Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, we should be in awe of who He is and we should bow before Him - if you aren't moved to worship Jesus, then you do not believe that He is who He says He is

2. If Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man, He deserves our repentance
 - a. Jesus, as the Son of God, is the great judge of all mankind and, as the Son of man, suffered in our place to satisfy the judgment of God, so if we believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man, we must be moved to repentance - to turn away from those things that Jesus hates and the things that Jesus died for
 - b. Jesus faults the crowd for failing to see this in Matthew 12:40-41 - *For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.*
 - c. If Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, we should turn away from the things He hates - if you aren't moved to repentance, to turn away from sin, then you do not believe that He is who He says He is

3. If Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man, He deserves our obedience
 - a. Jesus, as the Son of God, has all authority in Himself and, as the Son of Man, has brought that authority into this world, if we believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man, we must be moved to obey Him
 - b. Jesus himself says in John 3:35-36 - *The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*
 - c. If Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, we must obey Him - obeying and believing are synonymous acts - if you aren't moved to obey Jesus then you do not believe that He is who He says He is

4. If Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man, He deserves our unswerving devotion
 - a. For this last point this morning, I want to return to our text this morning
 - i. In verse 12, John moves away from the 'believing' language he's used through chapter 5 so far
 - ii. Instead, he says- *Whoever has the Son has life*
 - iii. The word 'has' there literally means 'holds' - literally: *whoever holds the Son has life, whoever does not hold the Son of God does not have life*
 - iv. John isn't moving away from believing to a new theme, but he is telling us what believing looks like - if we believe in Jesus we are going to grasp onto Him with everything we have
 - b. Jesus, as the Son of God, has life in Himself and, as the Son of Man, brings life into this world, so if we believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man we are going to hold onto Him with everything we have, we're going to hold on and not let go, we are going to hold on for, literally, dear life
 - c. This means we are only going to hold onto Jesus and let everything else go - we don't grasp something for dear life by loosely placing one hand on it, we don't hold on for dear life by stacking a bunch of things in our other hand - we hold on for dear life by letting everything else go and dedicate every ounce of our strength to holding on
 - d. Particularly, this means that we are not going to hold on to anything else as a source of life - we aren't going to rest in anything else as a source of salvation
 - i. There are lots of things we could hold onto instead of Jesus, things that might look like we're holding onto Jesus and might makes us think we're holding onto life, but they aren't really holding onto Jesus
 - ii. Going to church can't save you, a good, well-ordered family won't give you life, a rigid schedule and hard work won't provide you eternal security, nothing you eat or do or say or think will ever give life
 - iii. These things might look really good, they might have the appearance of godliness, they may even make other people think we're holding onto Christ but we're really holding onto these things, so Paul says in Colossians 2:23 - *These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.*
 - iv. So, we let go of every other hope we have, of every other thing that we think might give us life and hold on to Jesus alone for life, as Paul says in Philippians 3:7-11 - *But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith--- that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*
 - v. ((THOMAS AND APPLES))
 - e. If Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, we must cling only to Him, we must cling hard to Him because He only can give us life - if we don't give up everything else and grasp onto Christ for dear life we don't believe that Jesus is who He says He is and if we don't believe that He is who He says He is, we have no hope of life
 - f. *Whoever has the Son has life, whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life*