

## I. Introduction

Good morning! The Gospel of John ends with **John 21:25**. **“Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.”** This seems to me like an odd way for John to end his gospel. After all, John starts off with mystical and heavenly things, speaking of Jesus’ eternal existence as the second person of the trinity in **John 1:1**, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** And from there John continues and gives us a deeply theological record of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. But then John ends his gospel simply, basically saying, *“By the way, Jesus did lots of other stuff too.”* After all the deep teaching in John, the closing seems a bit mundane. But apparently John felt that it was important to tell us that his gospel was not a complete record, it included only some selected things about Jesus’ life.



So, how did John decide what to include in his gospel? John tells us in **John 20:30-31**, **“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”** John did not write his gospel to make us smart; he wrote it so that we might believe in Jesus and be saved.

But, we are currently studying Luke, so why am I mentioning all this? Because we need to remember that Luke does not record everything either, none of the gospel writers do. Jesus did and said so many things that it was impossible to write it all down. So each of the gospel writers chose a few things that they thought would help their readers to believe in Jesus. The painter, Domenico Ghirlandaio, imagined Luke sitting and writing like this. I think he did a good job of showing Luke deep in thought and prayer as he writes, carefully choosing what to include and what to leave out.



Last week, we read about how Jesus sent out the 12 apostles to preach and about how Jesus miraculously multiplied five loaves and two fish to feed over 5,000 people. After those events, Matthew records several things that Luke skips; so, some time has passed in between the events of last week’s study and the passage we will read today. Later on, starting in Luke 10, we will see that Luke includes a number of events that are not in the other gospels. With that introduction, let’s read Luke 9:18-36.

## II. Scripture Luke 9:18-36 (NIV)

[18] Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" [19] They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." [20] "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God." [21] Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. [22] And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." [23] Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. [24] For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. [25] What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? [26] If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. [27] I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

[28] About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. [29] As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as

bright as a flash of lightning. [30] Two men, Moses and Elijah, [31] appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. [32] Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. [33] As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) [34] While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. [35] A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." [36] When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

### III. Teaching

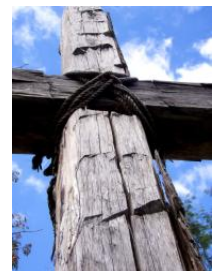
What do you see in these verses? I see Jesus revealing Himself to His disciples. The disciples have been following Jesus for a while, but they really don't understand who He is and what He is doing. Jesus tries to get them to think about it. **Luke 9:18b**, "he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" And then Jesus asked, in **Luke 9:20**, "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God." I think that Peter understood that Jesus is Christ, the Messiah, but that he did not yet understand that the Christ must also be the Lamb of God. John the Baptist declared, in **John 1:29**, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" But this didn't fit the disciples' thinking, their world-view didn't have room for a Messiah who would suffer and die for the people.

Jesus told them directly in **Luke 9:22**, "And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." But even when Jesus spoke about the cross, it is clear from the gospels that Peter and the other disciples had a very hard time accepting the idea that Jesus was going to die for the sins of the world.

Take a look at this painting by Teresa Carter. The innocent lamb, used so often in the many Old Testament sacrifices at the temple, is pictured bleeding and with a crown of thorns in the background. The lamb is a bit hard to see; it is almost transparent. The disciples saw the powerful miracles and heard the strong teaching of Jesus, but they had trouble seeing the Lamb of God. How about us? Can we see the Lamb of God?



Can we grasp the idea of a Savior who dies for the sins of the world, for my sins, and for yours? It is not always easy for us to understand either, but we are more used to this idea that the disciples were. Most of us heard about the cross from the time when we first heard about Jesus, it is central to our understanding of who Jesus is. The image of the Messiah dying for the sins of the world was hard for the disciples to understand and accept, but there are other images of Jesus in the Scriptures that the disciples could easily have accepted that may difficult for some of us.



What do you think of this image of Jesus? Here Jesus is shown on a white horse with an upraised sword, and the armies of heaven are following behind Jesus. This image of Jesus as a conquering king would probably have been easy for the disciples to accept. The Jews of that time lived in the hope and expectation that the Messiah would soon come to deliver them from the power of the Roman Empire. A Messiah with sword raised high to strike down their enemies would have been comforting and encouraging to them.



But for some of us, this image may be difficult to understand. Yet the Scriptures are clear; the very same Jesus who is the Lamb of God is also the conquering King who destroys the enemies of God and who judges the nations. This painting is based on **Revelation 19:11**, "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war." The context makes it clear that this Jesus.

Some Bible scholars take the Book of Revelation very literally and others interpret it more symbolically. We will leave that discussion for another time. For today, I don't care whether you take the image literally or symbolically, but I do want you to take it seriously because it is Scripture. Our Lord Jesus, who died on the cross for us, is the King of kings and He will destroy all evil and defeat all of the enemies of God. That final war may or may not use horses and swords, but it will be a war that reveals the overwhelming power and majesty of Jesus, Lord and God. Evil must be utterly destroyed so that perfect peace and everlasting joy can be brought in.



*Christ Climbing Mount Tabor with Peter, James, and John*, by Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo, ca.1770-80

Jesus is the suffering servant and the Lamb of God. Jesus is the Great Teacher and He is also the King of Kings. Jesus will conquer the hearts of those who love Him with grace, truth, and love. And Jesus will conquer the enemies of God with power and majesty. Through the Scriptures, we can see Jesus clearly, both as Lamb and as Lord. And if we see Him clearly, then perhaps we can also learn to hear Him clearly.

Take a look at **Luke 9:23-24**, “**Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."**” I think these words were probably just as difficult for the disciples 2,000 years ago as they are for us today. Jesus calls His followers to a life of total commitment centered on Him. The life of the faithful disciple is not focused on the things of this world or on one's own desires; the life of a faithful disciple is focused on following Jesus every day.

Jesus tells us to take up our own cross daily and follow Him. Jesus calls us to self-sacrifice and total commitment. This sounds very harsh and demanding. And yet, in **Matthew 11:28-30**, Jesus also says, “**Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**”

Some people ask, “*Which is the real life of the believer? self-sacrifice? or rest?*” But the answer is both; the real Christian life is full of both self-sacrifice and rest. Just as Jesus is both the Lamb of God and the conquering King of kings on the white horse, so also the life of the believer is both self-sacrifice giving and peaceful rest. In God's plan, in order to be the King on the white horse, Jesus first had to become the Lamb of God, because it was at the cross that the great victory over sin and death was won. And, for us, in order to find true rest and peace in Jesus Christ, we must first take up our cross and follow Him. God offers us grace and love, forgiveness of sins and eternal life, as free gifts. But the gifts are received at the foot of the cross; we receive when we come to Jesus.

Some of the ancient saints of the church understood these things very well. Take a look at the Prayer of Saint Francis (Japanese translation is available at [http://home.interlink.or.jp/~suno/yoshi/poetry/p\\_ assisi.htm](http://home.interlink.or.jp/~suno/yoshi/poetry/p_ assisi.htm)).

LORD,  
make me an instrument of Your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

O DIVINE MASTER,  
grant that I may not so much seek to be  
consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love;  
for it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal  
life.



*St Francis of Assisi*, wood sculpture by Pedro de Mesa

As we die to ourselves, we become alive in Christ Jesus. Here is the life of self-sacrifice that brings perfect peace and joy. Here is the work that is rest for our souls. And although the work may seem difficult, it is easy when we trust fully in Jesus, because He is always with us supporting and guiding us.

Today, we have tried to get a clearer view of who Jesus is and of the life of the faithful disciple. Before

we close, let's take a look at three witnesses who testified to the disciples about Jesus. Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him and climbed a mountain to pray. According to church tradition, this mountain was Mount Tabor. After they reached the top of the mountain, Jesus began to pray. What happened next? **Luke 9:29** tells us, "As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning." This is the transfiguration of Christ, when Jesus took on heavenly appearance and the disciples got a glimpse of the Kingdom of God.

And then, two other men appeared. **Luke 9:30-31**, "Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem." I will resist the temptation to do a full sermon about this verse, although it would be easy to do. But I think we should realize the significance of this event. Moses and Elijah lived hundreds of years before the time of Jesus, but now they are appearing alive with Jesus in glory. For those who have trusted in Jesus, there is no need to fear death, because when the believer leaves this world, he, or she, steps into the presence of Jesus Christ in glory.

Here Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus about his coming departure in Jerusalem; that is, they are having a talk about Jesus' coming crucifixion. They know about it, not just because they are now in glory, but also because it was revealed to them while they lived on earth, in prophecies and prophetic models which we still have in our Old Testament. And, although only two figures appear, to the Jewish mind, they would not be alone. Moses is the representative of the Law and Elijah is the representative of all the prophets. The two witnesses here are not just Moses and Elijah, it is the Law and the Prophets; the Old Testament itself.



The appearance of Moses and Elijah with Jesus is an amazing testimony of who Jesus is as Messiah and Lord. As a result of seeing this, Peter must have felt that he had to say something, but he didn't know what to say. Perhaps you have experienced a similar moment, something amazing happens and you cannot restrain yourself, you just have to say something. But you don't know what to say, so you just blurt out the first thing that comes to mind. **Luke 9:33**, "As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)" Moses and Elijah have come as witnesses to who Jesus is, but Peter's idea would instead put Jesus on the same level with them. Anyway nice try Peter; I probably would have messed the moment up even worse.

But there is to be no mistake about the meaning of the transfiguration, because now a third witness speaks up. **Luke 9:35**, "A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." God the Father speaks from heaven declaring that Jesus is God the Son and that we should listen to Him. In a moment on a mountaintop, Jesus is declared to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and the Son of God come in glory.

#### IV. Conclusion

Who is Jesus? He is Savior. He is Lord. He is the Lamb of God. He is the King of kings. He is Creator God. He is the Alpha and Omega. He is the Judge of all the earth. And He is so much more. How will we respond to Jesus? He is here now with us. I pray that we would open our hearts to receive Him and our mouths to sing His praises and for giving thanks to Him. Let's pray.



#### V. Closing Prayer