

“Let Him Go”
Stewarding the Presence Series, Part 11

This past year was pretty scary in the sense that I now have two children over 18-years-old. It is true that they say you learn a whole new way to pray when your kids’ become adults. It can be one of the most terrifying things to know your kids are out there and you have to trust them that they won’t be getting in trouble, that they will make good decisions, and that they will drive safely. At first, I didn’t handle it very well. I tracked my kids every ten minutes on Life360 and demanded a play by play of every place they were going with every person they were with, and all their friend’s social security numbers...you know, simple things. But it was driving me crazy. I don’t know if you have figured this out yet or not, but worry is a massive burden to carry. Worry takes all your energy, and the sad thing is, worry doesn’t accomplish anything except negative consequences. Slowly with the Lord I have learned to let go. I have to trust my kids and more importantly, I have to trust my God.

Today we are in chapter 11 of the Gospel of John. As a church we are taking the word the Lord gave to us for 2025 (which is Communion) and exploring the book of John to see how Jesus had unbroken communion with the Father in all He endured. Today we are not going to look at the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead. Mark Lambert did a fantastic job preaching on this a few weeks ago. Today we are going to focus on verses 47-57 where the religious leaders could not let go of the fear of losing their influence and position. Like my struggle letting go of control with my kids, and like the religious leader’s refusal to let go of their status, we all struggle at times with letting go.

There are so many reasons why we refuse to let go. As I took time to explore the reasons why it is difficult for us to let go, I found one common culprit. That culprit is fear. We *fear* that God won’t come through for us. We *fear* a delayed solution. We *fear* being out of control. We *fear* others can’t do a better job than we can. Let me just say, you cannot have an abiding relationship with the Father if you are overcome with fear. Fear gets in the way of fellowship.

Let me help clear up some misunderstandings about letting go. Letting go does not mean forsaking all responsibility. It does not mean to sit around idly and do nothing. Letting go does not mean you don’t care. It actually means you care enough to let go of your control and turn to God’s control. Letting go doesn’t mean giving up control to God and then hovering over His shoulder. I remember when I was a little boy growing up in Southern California, my grandparents from Mexico came to the States to pay us a visit. My mom was going crazy in the kitchen because she was trying to cook and prep for all the guests, but my grandma was hovering over her shoulder telling her all the ways she was doing things wrong. Finally, my mom just stepped aside and let her do it all. As a little boy I laughed so hard at my mom’s frustration. We have to be careful that we don’t do this with God. We have to be careful that we don’t say, “Oh God I surrender, take control, I release my burdens on to You.” And then question His every move. So, today we are going to explore how to truly surrender and let go. If you have your Bibles, we are going to John chapter 11, and we are going to pick up in verse 47.

As you are turning there, let me catch us all up to speed on what's happening in the book of John. Specifically in chapter 11 we are coming to the end of the seven signs. These signs were as follows:

1. Turning water to wine.
2. Jesus healing the official's son.
3. Healing at the pool of Bethesda.
4. Feeding of the 5,000.
5. Jesus walking on water.
6. Jesus healing the man born blind.
7. Raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Every Gospel writer had a purpose and audience that they wrote to. John's purpose was to display Jesus so that you believe. It was much different than Luke's Gospel. Luke the physician, wanted to walk you through the facts and details and chronologically show you the life of Jesus. John doesn't do this. John gives you snapshots of Jesus to help you believe that He is the Son of God. He is saying, "I want to show you some things so that you will completely believe Jesus.

Not only does John finish his "showing" in chapter 11 but there is a second transition that happens. The first 11 chapters of John take place over a matter of years, chapter 12 takes place over a matter of days, and chapters 13-18 over a matter of hours. John takes more time on the end of Jesus earthly life than any other Gospel writer. And in this portion of Scripture we are about to read, we are seeing the dilemma of human condition. Because the people who are supposed to believe, don't. And the people who were not supposed to believe, do. I hope you have found John 11:47...let's begin:

47 Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. 48 If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." 49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." 51 Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. 53 So from that day on they planned together to kill Him. 54 Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples. 55 Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. 56 So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?" 57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.

– John 11:47-57 NASB1995

At first the religious leaders wanted Jesus silent and wanted Him out of the region. They were offended at Jesus. But now they are in a place where they cannot deny that Jesus could be the

Messiah. In fact, of all the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees actually believed in the resurrection. The Sadducees did not believe in the afterlife. He was doing miracles that were supernatural and speaking with heavenly authority. The main issue is that these religious leaders feared that if Jesus kept doing what He was doing, they would lose their places of honor and the privileges that came with it. Caiaphas even prophesied that Jesus would save the world, but it was more information than conviction for him. Now instead of being offended by Jesus, they were threatened by Jesus and wanted nothing more than for Jesus to be killed so they would no longer be in danger of losing everything they valued.

There is one powerful statement in this little portion of Scripture “*If we let Him go on like this...*” In **verse 48** the religious leaders say, “Let Him go on...” The words “go on” are actually one word. It is the same Greek word used when the disciples *left* their nets to follow Jesus. It is also the same word used when Jesus in **Matthew 9** “your sins are *forgiven*.” How many know when the disciples left their nets, they left *everything* behind? How many know when Jesus forgave our sins, He forgave *every* sin? It is concrete, it is complete.

These leaders saw enough of Jesus’ miracles that they were now actually believing He could be the Messiah. But even though they were being convinced, Jesus Lordship threatened what they valued most. They valued their positions, fame, and privileges more than truth and character. It is so easy to shake a finger at these leaders, but you and I are guilty of doing this as well. How many things have we refused to give up? How many times were we supposed to worship but refused to give up worry? How many times were we supposed to trust but we did it our own way?

So how do we fully let things go so that we can fully follow the Father? It should be a very obvious word. The word is *trust*. The greater our trust in the Father, the greater our ability to let go. Allow me to illustrate this with an example from the best dog I have ever owned. In 2017 we were just betrayed and lost our ministry position. We had very poor doctors so all of Nikki’s mental health conditions and even her sleep apnea all went undiagnosed. I don’t know how the girl made it through life. She battled severe depression and horrific panic attacks. One thing she kept begging for was a dog for therapy. At that time, I was working full time as a maintenance man and full time as a church planter. She was home alone a lot. So, we found a lady who rescued dogs and we began to try out different dogs. It was quite a nightmare at first. Finally, we landed on a 10-year-old Schnauzer we named Lettie and a small poodle mix. Lettie had a bad history. She was saved from the streets of Mexico and then lived in a house with 5 Great Dane’s and other Schnauzers. Who knows how many litters she was forced to have. Who knows how often she was neglected, abused, and went without food. When we got her, her hair was matted and overgrown. But she won the lottery coming to our family. As you know our dogs are our babies and we spoiled them rotten. You know, I own a dehydrator and I have never used it for humans. I have only used it to make dog treats for my puppies.

I remember one day specifically I came home from work and still in my uniform and was filling Nikki in on my day and asking her about the new dogs and Lettie was sitting there on the bed and I decided to pet her and give her a little hug. She started growling at me and if I continued would have bitten me. So I said, “That’s alright girl, we are gonna be best friends soon enough.” And we were. Why? Because I fed her good. I walked her. I played with her. I gave her people

food *all* the time. Soon enough she was my shadow...she really was my best friend. I didn't realize it then, but that dog was used by God to get me through the most difficult season of my life. I almost collapsed from crying so hard when she passed. Lettie learned to let go. How? She had to let go of her past, she had to accept my faithfulness to her, and she had to learn how to stop questioning my motives but follow my lead in trust. We can all learn this morning from that dog. Let me give you three things this morning on how we can have better surrender to better let go and follow Jesus.

#1 –Forget the Past.

In **Genesis 41:51** Joseph had endured so much in Egypt and finally was seeing the victory of the Lord in his life. He rescued all of Israel from the famine. He named his firstborn son Manasseh which means “causes me to forget.” All of the good that God did for Joseph eclipsed all the evil the enemy did to him. Our lives should be no different. When we think about the Lord and how good He is and all the good He has done for us, it should cause us to forget. The beautiful thing of the Christian life is that there is always a promise ahead of us and there is always the hope of eternity. We see examples of letting go of the past in both the Old and New Testaments:

*“Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. 19 “Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it?
– Isaiah 43:18-19 NASB1994*

13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 3:13-14 NASB1995

When you let go of the past, you have to let go of all the attachments. Letting go of the past is not ignoring or pretending it doesn't exist. Letting go of the past means *healing* from the past. Now, God can deliver you and you can be free of your past in a single moment. There are also amazing Christian counselors that can help you navigate through your past and help you fully heal. When you find healing from your past you can then stop *dwelling* in the past. When you stop focusing on the past, you can then begin to focus on what God is saying and what He is doing in the present.

#2 – Accept God's Faithfulness.

I have used this example several times before, but it is one of the clearest examples of focusing on God's faithfulness. In my first year of Bible College when I was 19 years old, I had an Old Testament Survey course led by Professor Sammy. I don't remember any other professor's names except Sammy Burton. He was a jolly man. He kept a 3x5 card in his shirt pocket of all his favorite verses. I said, “Professor Sammy, you are a professor and are 76 years old. Shouldn't you have memorized those Scriptures by now?” He laughed and said this line that I will never forget: “The key to memorization is review, review, review. The key to forgetting is neglect, neglect, neglect.” What he taught me was even though I may memorize a Scripture, if I neglect it long enough, I will forget it. He showed me the power of never failing to review God's Word.

Not only do we need to review God's Word, but we need to review His faithfulness. Here's the problem. If you immerse yourself in worry all day long. If you meditate on fear all day long, it will cause you to forget the good things the Lord has done for you.

The Psalmist in chapter 77 says is crying out and stating, "could it be that God has forgotten and His promises have ceased?" But then he switches gears and says this (not in your notes or the screen), "*I shall remember the deeds of the Lord; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. 12 I will meditate on all Your work And muse on Your deeds. 13 Your way, O God, is holy; What god is great like our God? 14 You are the God who works wonders; You have made known Your strength among the peoples.*"

We discipline ourselves to pray every day, study the Word every day, fast at times, worship at all times. But we must also make it a practice to remember the faithfulness of the Lord. You may need to buy a journal and write down things He has done for you. You may need to record prophetic words people have spoken over your life. Whatever you do, make it a goal to remember the faithfulness of the Lord.

#3 – Stop questioning God and start Following.

Let's be really practical here. God does things in mysterious and funny ways. He heals blind eyes with mud. One thing I see in the Gospels is that Jesus says "follow Me" without giving a reason. But you see, when you have healed from your past and have a daily practice of remember the faithfulness of God, following becomes really easy. In fact, there is joy in following. Have you heard the term "passenger princess?" Passenger princesses are those ladies who hate driving and want to let their man do all the work of driving, figure out directions, making the decisions to they can nap or enjoy the views or scroll on their phone. Let me just say, there are some passenger *princes* as well. I am not saying to be idle or lazy but I am saying when you fully believe God's faithfulness, it is easy to fully follow His lead. You can rest and enjoy the journey of following the One with the plan. Let me encourage you to examine your heart this week and ask yourself, "How easy and with how much joy do I follow Jesus?"