

John: The Word Became Flesh - John 4:43-54

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 November 2023

Preacher: Scott Liddell

[0 : 0 0] Before we consider God's word this morning I want to share just a few things. First, thank you for praying for us while we were away last week. Pastor Eric and Josh, myself, David and Heather and Matt were all in Washington DC at a church planting conference to learn what we can to help us better as we look to plant the church in the month of May, help us to understand what it is. And so I just wanted to share what it's that we were looking at or considering as we were at this conference. The conference did a good job to say, what is your theology?

What do you believe? And then what is the practice of what you believe in a thing called church? And so that's kind of what we were... So what is the practice of church in a worship service? What is the practice of what you believe about the theology in a church budget in an elder meeting? And so all these facets of the relating to a church, what is it that you believe and then how should that inform or influence what you do? And so that's what the conference was about.

And indeed, while it was for specifically with regard to church planting, it was just about the church. And so much of it was just beneficial for all of us. And so we'll be implementing some of the things that we were caused to consider even here at fourth. So I just say, I want to say the conference was worth its weight in gold and that's what it was about. Second, you know you miss someone or you like someone when you spend time thinking about them. And so I remember dating my wife and I couldn't stop thinking about her. Well, because I liked her. And I just... I wanted you to know I missed you and how do I know that? It's because I thought about you often while we were away. Even on Sunday morning as it was noon in Washington, DC, I remember praying for you, your service here is where things were beginning to get underway at 9 o'clock here and knowing that... And I texted Jay praying for you. I'm looking forward to being hearing God's Word and the report of God's Word when I get back. And so I just missed you. And then lastly, the thing

I want to do before we consider God's Word is today I will be preaching without any sermon slides. And so some of you are asking, can't even do that. And so we will both find out. But today I am grateful to look at this text. We all have heard of those who may we call maybe foxhole conversions. Those who maybe have served on the front line and bullets are whizzing past them and shells are dropping all around them and it's getting hot in battle and they pray something like, Lord if you get me out of this and if I survive I will serve you for the rest of my life. And those foxhole conversions is what we may call those. But that's not the test of a man's faith. How sincere one is not when you are in the heat of a battle but it's the test rather than that it's measured when the pressure is off. Will one forget God and go back to his old ways or will he go deeper and develop a genuine faith in the person of Christ? What will his response be when his immediate need is over? Will he repent of his sins, trust in Christ as Savior? Will he follow him when the crisis is over? This applies to all of us. Maybe there's a health diagnosis. The heat of the battle right now for you. Maybe a health diagnosis. Maybe it is a financial crisis. You need a job. Perhaps you are single and you long to be married to a husband or a wife. And you want deliverance from this immediate need, this crisis that you may be in. But I pray that we would be a people who while we recognize there is an immediate need, we would be a people who serve the Lord all the days of our life.

We would understand the riches of the glory of Christ that we would delight in him and make much of him in our hearts. We couldn't stop speaking of what the Lord has done in our life and who he is. So the central point of our verse today, our text today, is just this. That God uses our present need to usher us to our truest need. God uses our present need to usher us, to carry us to the person who has our truest need, who our truest need is the person of Jesus Christ.

[5 : 14] And that is going to be the theme. So why is it that I don't have any slides? Because this is going to be the point that we will state over and over and over. God uses our present need to usher us to our truest need. We see in our text today in verses 34, John chapter 4 verses 34 through 35, we see, I call these bridge verses, they help connect what came before to what is about to be shared with us. And so we read in verses 34 through 35, and after two days he departed for Galilee, for Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown. So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast, for they too had gone to the feast.

We're told that after two days of fruitful ministry in verses 34, that he was in the Samaritan verse. We spent the last two Sundays talking about this fruitful ministry that he had in the city of Sychar there in Samaria. Jesus now heads north to the, almost due north to this town called Cana of Galilee. Jesus states something interesting in verse 44 that he says that he himself had testified that the prophet has no honor in his own hometown. So he's heading into the region where he just said a prophet has no honor in his hometown, this region of Galilee. He knows that the vast majority of the Galileans will reject him, and it will be no surprise to him, but according to God's divine plan. And this should harken us back to chapter 2 verses 23 through 25. Remember when Jesus was at the Mount, the Temple Mount, he had come to Jerusalem for the Passover, and he had made a whip to cleanse the Temple Mount from being a place of a market, had been turned into a market. And so he had cleansed the Temple Mount, and he had done other miracles, and then it says, and people had believed in him, but it says that Jesus did not entrust himself to them. And then we have the story of Nicodemus right after that. And so what is Jesus doing is he is saying,

I'm not entrusting you, but there is a man called Nicodemus, and I'm going to tell you about him who I did entrust myself to because of the fruit of Nicodemus's life indicate that he embraced Christ for who he was. So here we have this interesting story that says that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown, and guess what? Now we're going to hear perhaps of a story of someone who did believe in Christ, and his name we don't know, but we just know that he is a Roman official. So Jesus is contrasting, I believe here, he's saying, hey, prophet has no honor in his own hometown, but let me tell you of someone who I do believe did demonstrate honor to him, who may have believed in his name, and he is this Roman official that I'm about to introduce to you. So when he came to Galilee, then verse 45, he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast, for they too had gone to the feast. So consider this, Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover, he had done all these miraculous deeds, and this is why people believed him, but remember Jesus did not entrust himself to the vast majority of them. So now he takes a detour, goes to Samaria, the Jews don't go that direction, they would normally go around following the Jordan River up to the Sea of Galilee. See, this is why you should have a map upon the screen, but I'm not doing this. And so you would go around, so these folks had a one or two day head start, so they get back to their hometowns saying, hey, we know this Jesus, and he just happens now, because he took this detour to meet this woman at the well that we just looked at last couple of Sundays, and now Jesus arrives, and everybody is a buzz with what Jesus has done. He's performed all these miracles, and that is the setup for our story. And God uses our present need to usher us to our truest need, which brings us to finding a man who has a need in verse 46. So he came again to

Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water to wine, and at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. And when this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and to heal his son for he was at the point of death. So Jesus said to him, unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. But the official said to him, sir, come down before my child dies.

The man is called an official. He's a Roman official. He's a royal official. Herod the Great had died shortly after Jesus' birth. His kingdom was then upon his death divided into four quadrants around the territory that he had authority over. Of those four quadrants, one of his sons had ruled, known as Herod the Tetrarch, also known as Herod Antipas. It is Herod Antipas who would ultimately kill John the Baptist that we will get to in a few chapters. So this gentleman that we see here in verse 46 when he says he's an official, he likely serves in Herod Antipas's court. What do we know of this man? That he will likely never have come to find Jesus if his life was not under a personal crisis. What is striking is how this is how human this account is. He had likely sought the best physicians in Capernaum. It's one of the largest cities there on the Sea of Galilee, but they had been unable to help. He had likely been a man of means. He serves in under Herod Antipas's court and so he likely had some financial means. So he had sought all the best help money could buy, but money could not save his son's life. You can imagine how helpless this father felt, unable to do anything, and how he listened to his wife weep and plead for him just to do something to save his son's life. You can imagine how helpless he felt. This Jewish man, the Jewish men though in town had recently returned from Jerusalem. It was mandatory for men of Israel to make pilgrimage down to Jerusalem for Passover and so now they have returned. So can you imagine there's a buzz in town by these Jewish men who have said, hey there was a guy in Jerusalem who we believe he's to be the Messiah. In fact he performs signs indicating such and so this this man who has this need whose son is about to die is hearing a buzz that there's a man who is a miracle worker. Additionally he heard that he was up in Cana of Galilee which is about a 20-mile hike from Capernaum. And so we see this man in verse 47 heard that

[13 : 28] Jesus had come from Judea of Galilee and he went to him and asked him to come down to heal his son for he was at the point of death. So this man now travels 20 miles to find Jesus. And the word in the in verse 47 the word asked in the original language indicates a repeated action. The man is begging for Jesus to come heal his son. He is desperate. Notice also that his understanding of how Jesus could do this. He requests come down and heal my son. In verses 47 and 49 we see this common phrase. He pleads with Jesus he makes a repeated plea come down with me you're up in Cana of Galilee come down to the Sea of Galilee and then you can heal my son. God uses our present need to usher us to our truest need Jesus Christ himself. Look with me in verse 48. So Jesus said to him unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe. That would have seemed to me to be a rather harsh statement. I'm pleading for my son's life and you tell me that unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe. But we must know that the verb or the word you in verse 48 is plural both times. So we should read verse 48 reading this way and Jesus said to him unless you all see signs and wonders you all will not believe. Jesus is not just speaking to this man but he's speaking to the crowds who also are gathered around this man who are here are with him when he hears this plea to save his son. The official and others were not seeking to worship him or follow him for who he is nor are they coming to him as a sinner seeking forgiveness and desiring eternal life.

No, he is like a soldier in a foxhole desperate for immediate help who was absent of the resources needed to heal his son. He was desperate for help. So Jesus rebukes. So Jesus rebukes was directed both at him the official and the other listeners listening and tending for him to see helping them to see their greater need. Jesus is wanting them to move from a foxhole faith to a genuine faith in Christ but God uses our present need to usher us to see our truest need. I love that the man does not seem to be offended by the rebuke and he makes the plea one more time in verse 48 and the official said to him, sir come down before my child dies. What's interesting in this plea in this request he has two erroneous assumptions. First, he has the erroneous assumption that Jesus must be physically present in order to heal. Notice in verse 47 and in 49 he says come down with me. Jesus come down to Capernaum and heal. You must be, his assumption is Jesus you must be physically present to heal my son.

What does this indicate? He has no idea fully who Jesus is yet. Jesus is the second person of the Godhead who spoke all things into creation. Jesus spoke, let there be light and there was. Jesus spoke and all the vegetation of the earth was. He formed the planets. He formed the suns. He's formed dark matter whatever that is. Quasars. I don't know. He created all of it and he created humanity in his own image. I don't think Jesus needs to be present to heal his son but it's obvious this man is saying Jesus come down to Capernaum and heal my son.

He's about to die. Second erroneous assumption that the man makes. He had hope that Jesus could heal his son. I'll give him that but he did not have a category for thinking that God could raise him from the dead. Look with his last plea in verse 49. Sir come down before my child dies. If my child were to die it's all over. No one can do anything at that point. Jesus rose Lazarus from the dead but he doesn't have a category for that. He doesn't fully appreciate or know who it is that he's speaking to. It causes me to wonder and I reflected on my prayers this last week. I wonder what my prayers indicate and what erroneous assumptions my prayers have. And do I do I fully appreciate the one to whom I am praying to, the very God, the eternal one who always was and always will be.

Do my prayers indicate that is the one to whom I am praying. God uses our present need to usher us to our truest need. In verse 50 God said to him, Jesus said to him, go your son will live. The man believed his word that Jesus had spoke to him and went on his way. That those words go and your son will live challenges this man's feeble faith and challenges this man's feeble faith in Jesus's ability and here's why. He put him in a dilemma of faith or a crisis of faith in this way. Number one, if the boy's father refuses to go to Capernaum without taking Jesus with him, he would show he did not believe Jesus's word. So if he said, Jesus you got to come with me I don't want to go, then he's disobeying Jesus at his word and it would consequently likely not receive the benefit that his distrust demonstrated. So if the boy's father refused to go to Capernaum without taking Jesus that was a dilemma. Do I do

[21 : 01] I do this? Can Jesus heal my son without him physically going with me? Secondly, on the other hand, can you imagine showing up in town he's thinking I'm going to show up and my dying son is going to be there and my wife and everyone is expecting me to have done something about this. I have no outward assurance that my son would recover. I'm gonna have to go by faith. He was forced to make a difficult choice between insisting on evidence and thus showing disbelief or exercising faith without any tangible proof and that's the dilemma that he was put in. And the basic question is, is he gonna take Jesus at his word?

That's the root of all the... is he gonna take Jesus at his word? You say, well what was the word? Specifically the word was go. That word go is an imperative word. It's a command. Jesus is commanding the man to go. Go and your son will live.

So the command was accompanied by a promise your son will live. But the command is you must go to this Roman official. What I love is this man learned to trust Christ out of a compulsion of... what I call a compulsion of necessity.

The man requested of Jesus to come and Jesus told the man go. When we cry out to him in our desperate need we must take Jesus at his word. This taking God at his word is imperative for all of us. It reminds me of the story of the Syrian army captain Naaman who had leprosy. So here's and we find this account in 2 Kings 5 1 through 19. So in the Old Testament you have this Syrian commander of the Syrian army. His name is Naaman. He has leprosy and he just happens to have one who serves him as a slave girl who happens to be a Jewish slave girl. And she says, oh there's a prophet of the Almighty God in Israel and his name is Elisha and you should go to him and I bet he could call on God to heal you. And so Naaman puts together this rich reward for the one who could possibly heal him. And with this rich reward he makes travel to Israel to find this guy Elisha. He finds this guy Elisha and with this rich reward he finds where he is staying. And so he sends for Elisha and a servant of Elisha meets him and the servant goes into the house.

Elisha doesn't even get out of his house. That would make me upset. First thing that would make me upset. Second, Elisha tells the guy, oh just go down to the Jordan River, wash yourself, dip yourself seven times and you'll be healed.

[24 : 13] Naaman is upset to say the least. He gets back on his little entourage and he heads back to Syria. But then one of his servants, some of his servants ask him the question. And we find this is the question in 2 Kings 5 13 reads this.

My father, speaking of Naaman, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, climb some big mountain or something, would you have done it? How much more than when he says to you wash and be clean would you should you obey? So Naaman went and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan River and he was cured of his leprosy. And it says then he believed the word of the prophet, he obeyed and was healed. He took God through his prophet at his word.

Obedience requires unnatural things in God's upside-down economy. Both for this Roman official and Naaman, they obeyed God's word and enjoyed the fruit of obeying God at his word, taking God at his word. However, there's another account with the rich young ruler in Matthew 20 1 through 16. It serves as a great example of someone who did not take God at his word. You may recall a rich young ruler, man, approaches Jesus and he asks him what what what can I do to have eternal life and the man and Jesus says well you must have kept the whole law and he says well I've done it since my youth, I've done that and he goes oh okay well then I tell you what why don't you sell all that you have give to the poor and come follow me. And then we read and the man went away from following Jesus. Jesus just gave him a command, he didn't take him at his word, he gave him his command and he went away and it says and he was sad. I can't help but also think there may have been some wet eyes in Jesus too, also sad. You were this close from taking me at my word and enjoying the rich benefits of it and now you're going away sad. So church, let us be a church who takes God at his word. Whatever he has said, may we be a people who just take God at his word. You say Scott how does this apply to us taking God at his word? God may be calling some of you to forgive someone who has harmed you deeply. Others the Lord may be asking you to recognize your own fault and ask for someone to forgive you and to seek reconciliation. Others God may be asking to step up into his loving leadership role that he has given you in the home and spiritually initiating loving conversations and saturating your home with gospel conversations. Other the

Lord is calling you to trust him in your finances to give to the Lord and to take him at his word that is more blessed to give than to receive. You cannot serve two masters and on and on we could go. Others have not obeyed the Lord perhaps at being baptized or being courageous to share your faith or to simply begin an abiding relationship with the Lord. This week as I was considering this in my own life, I was thinking about I've noticed a habit in my own life recently of I can be given to worry and Pastor Eric in his shepherding prayer also spoke to this and I've watched myself give myself to worldly solutions for anxiety and I have found myself eating more when I feel anxious and I thought why do I go there why am I not taking the Lord at his word and then I was refreshed and reminded and I wanted to find the verses and read them again and again come to me all of you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest take the yoke upon you take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble and heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light

I want to be someone who takes the Lord at his word and he says come to me Scott not these other things that the world has to offer so I want to be refreshed by the Lord and take him at his word what about you last we see the fruit of this and as in verse 51 and as he was going down his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering so he asked them what hour he began to feel better and they said to him yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him and the father knew that it was the hour when Jesus said to him your son will live and he himself believed in all of his household this is the second sign that Jesus did when he had come to Judy of Gali I love this his servants go out this fever has broke and so as he's trekking 20 miles down to Capernaum his his servants are now coming to find him to tell him your son's fever is broke he is well and he asked what time ago and it was the very hour that Jesus said to him go your son will live all too often people are amazed at coincidences but rarely do they attribute them to the directly to the activity of God but this man did he knew exactly why his son was feeling better he understood that

[30 : 39] Jesus was not merely a miracle worker but the one who is rumored to be true that he is the Messiah the one that the Jews rumored him to be he knew I love that there are no coincidences they're just divine appointments this man knew why his son felt better I remember there is a neighbor who I found in my neighborhood found to be difficult and I wanted a time to rebuild a relationship with him and not rebuild it build a relationship with him and to clear up misunderstandings and things but I wanted it to be natural and so I was praying Lord would you allow me to share you with him but also for me to have a relationship with him that we could build on a better foundation than we have started and so I was praying and for this and I happened to be coming down to the street and he happened to be coming down the street and we were approaching each other and we were both getting our mail and I knew because I had been praying the way I had been praying for this man that the only reason why he was checking his mail at the same time I was checking my mail is not coincidence it was a divine appointment that the Lord has been answering

I love this I'll conclude with this he did what was normal and natural he told his whole family what he believed to be true and says in verse 53 and the father knew that the it was the hour that Jesus had said to him your son will live and he himself believed in all of his household he couldn't help but just go back to his house and say let me tell you about the one whom I met let me tell you about the one who I know healed my son let me tell you about this person Jesus I met him and he believed in his whole household believed because he took Jesus at his word so what is your present need God uses our present need to usher us to our truest need who is found in the person of Jesus what is your present need a reconciled relationship with someone a financial concern rest for your soul forgiveness from one another an employment opportunity a friendship a biblical community a desire to be married a health concern are you expecting saw are you experiencing sorrow or scarcity of soul do you need some deliverance from a crisis I'll don't waste the crisis don't waste that need that you have to allow that need to usher you to your truest need who is found in the person of Christ delight in him allow him to minister to your soul and you say Scott that's that's true for non-believers but what about believers that our truest need is Christ oh I'm speaking to believers as well I think of Peter's words after Jesus turns to him and asked the disciples do you want to go to the people had stopped following Jesus and and Jesus turns to his disciples do you guys want to go to and Peter I love Peter's words Lord whom shall we go for you have words of eternal life and we believe and are sure that you are the Christ the Son of the Living God where else are we to go as

Christians not just as non-Christian where else are we to go he is our truest he is the one who satisfies our truest need where else can we go you are the Christ the Son of the Living God may we be a people who understand the riches of his glory may we be a people who make much of Christ in our hearts and in our life let us cultivate affections for the Lord Jesus Christ he's the only one who satisfies he's the only one who can remove sin he's the only one who could satisfy one's every need and may we be a people who take God at his word and allow our need to usher us to our truest need the one who can satisfy that need is Jesus Christ and may we be a people who do so let's pray father thank you for this day thank you for thank you for your opportunity to look at your word and consider how beautiful and magnificent and wonderful you are thank you for this story of an account of a man who despite you saying there's no honor for a prophet in his own hometown there seemed to be one who who did give you honor who took you at your word who believed in you and then went and told everyone of its household about you Lord I pray that we would spend time with you and in your word and get to know you and make you the one who is the chief of our affections forgive us Lord for going after things of this world to satisfy our soul for only you can we love you Lord and we thank you for your your glorious goodness of your riches of your grace and it's in your name which is we pray amen you you

you you you you