

Let's pray. God, we do believe that you talk to us. You speak to us through your word. These words are breathed out by you. They are alive and active.

And we pray that by your spirit tonight, as I seek to be faithful to this text, that you would speak to us in a very clear and powerful way.

So do whatever it is you want to do, God, in this place tonight. And we will give you the glory for it. And we ask it in Jesus' name. And God's people said, Amen.

Amen. You can be seated. Sarah Berg and her cousin Lisa were driving down Interstate 94 in Wisconsin when they heard an awful noise.

[6 : 00] They pulled over to the side of the road to discover they had a flat tire. They didn't really know what to do. It was a Saturday night. It was dark outside.

Neither of them knew how to change a tire. And so Lisa decided that she would call her husband, who was several, several miles away.

And in the meantime, they would just wait until he got there. It wasn't long after they were waiting that an old red pickup truck pulled in behind them.

They were a bit nervous because anytime somebody just randomly shows up, you never really know what you're going to get. Fortunately, Sarah and Lisa were relieved to discover that this was a 61-year-old man named Victor and his wife.

And Victor offered to change their tire for them. They were extremely grateful for his help and his generosity. They thanked him over and over again.

[7 : 08] And Victor looked at Sarah and he said, quote, God put me in the right place at the right time. And Victor had no idea just how true those words really were.

You see, as he fixed the tire and the ladies were good to go, Victor and Sarah shook hands and then he drove away. Sarah and Lisa left shortly after.

Just a little bit down the road, Sarah and Lisa noticed an old red pickup truck on the side of the road. It sure looked a lot like Victor's.

And sure enough, when they passed the truck, they looked and they saw Victor's wife. So they thought, well, maybe they left something and they pulled to the side of the road.

When Sarah stepped out of the car, the first thing she heard was Victor's wife scream, I think he's having a heart attack.

[8 : 20] Sarah just happened to be a certified nurse trained in CPR. When Sarah got in the truck, Victor had no pulse.

He wasn't breathing. While Lisa called 911, Sarah used all of her medical training to keep Victor alive until other personnel could arrive.

Because of Sarah, Victor survived what most certainly would have killed him right there on the side of the road.

In fact, when they reunited at the hospital, Victor's wife thanked Sarah for saving his life.

Faith family, have you ever had one of those moments where the only thing you could say was, God did that? Amen? Are you awake tonight?

[9 : 23] You ever had one of those moments where like the only way, the only rational way you could explain what happened was God did that. He planned it, he ordained it, and there's no doubt in your mind.

I mean, you mean to tell me that Victor just so happened to stop and help ladies who didn't know how to change a tire, and just a few moments later, he's going to have a heart attack, and one of the ladies that he just randomly stopped to help on the side of the road happens to be a nurse fully equipped with the training to keep him alive?

Victor was exactly right. God put him in the right place at the right time. I want you to think about tonight.

I want you to think about those moments in life where you knew God did that. There is no other explanation for it. That check that just shows up in the mail for the exact amount you needed, that has happened to some of you.

That out of the blue conversation with a friend that you didn't plan at all, and it was exactly what you needed. I will hear people say like, that sermon, like, did you talk to my spouse, right?

[10 : 37] Did somebody tell you? Because that is precisely what I needed to hear. There are so many situations where we walk through and we say, the only rational answer is, God did that.

That is exactly what happens here in John chapter 4. In the passage that we just read, we are introduced to a royal official.

Now, we may not know a lot about this guy, but we know a few things about this guy. First of all, the fact that he is a royal official means that he works for Herod Antipas. Herod wasn't so much a king, but he was certainly kind of a ruler of that territory.

He's the Herod that wanted to kill Jesus that first Christmas. And so this guy, no doubt, works for Herod. And because we know this, and in fact, the word official has the root word in the Greek of the same word for like king or kingdom.

So this guy's high up. He's got great status in this culture, which means we know a few other things about him. He's got plenty of money. He knows lots of people.

[11 : 54] He's well-networked. And he has some level of authority. We also know based on verse 46 that he lives in Capernaum.

You'll notice kind of on this map here, there's Capernaum, kind of in the north part of the Sea of Galilee. And then you'll see Cana down here just above Nazareth. That's about a 20 to 25 mile distance.

It's going up if you're going to Cana, and it's coming down if you're going to Capernaum, as you kind of see in the text. This guy, that distance is, oh, it's maybe, probably not a full day's walk, but a good portion of the day, maybe six to eight hours or so.

But this guy, no doubt, has transportation. To be of a status that he is, he's got some transportation where he's not going to have to walk. So this is a few hour journey for him.

So this official has a lot, but what he does not have is the ability to change his situation. Look at verse 47. When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down to heal his son, for he was at the point of death.

[13 : 16] This man comes to Jesus in a bit of a crisis faith. He's experiencing a crisis in his life. His son is ill to the point of death.

No doubt he's tried everything. He has exhausted all of his contacts. He's used all the resources that he has, just as you would if this were your child.

He has tried to find help, but no help can be found. He needs a what, faith family? Miracle. He needs a miracle.

And according to the reports he's hearing, according to the rumors around town, Jesus is the only hope he has. You're going to notice a pattern forming through this series.

Now let me just stop for just a minute to say, this man, like a lot of people, his faith is born out of a crisis situation. And I've pastored now for many, many, many years, and I have seen this many, many, many times.

[14 : 19] That there's something about a crisis in life, a desperate situation, that makes people very open to God, very open to faith. You know what I'm talking about.

You get that medical report that's very bad news. You've tried and tried, and you cannot find a job. You're sinking financially, and there's no end in sight.

For whatever reason, you find yourself in a very dark and lonely place. Whatever the situation, here's what you've come to know. I can't get myself out of this situation.

Have you ever been there? I've tried. I've tried everything I know to do to get myself out of this situation. I need a miracle. I need a Savior.

And there are some clues in the text that point us to just how desperate this man is. For example, in verse 47, notice that he didn't send for Jesus.

[15 : 20] He came to Jesus. Now, a man of his reputation can send people to say, bring him to me, but he comes on his own. Another clue is in verse 47, that he doesn't make demands.

This man of great status actually ends up begging. How humiliating is that? Verse 49, he doesn't act entitled.

Do you know who I am? Do you know the power I have? Listen, I'll just get Herod on the phone, and we'll shut this ministry down. He doesn't act entitled at all.

He acts humbled. He acts in humility. And this is maybe not as obvious in the text, but he's open to faith. He's open to spiritual things.

That is, okay, this guy is either a Jew or a Gentile. Okay, I went to seminary for that. How brilliant was that statement? He's either Jew or Gentile. If he's a Gentile, then he doesn't believe in Yahweh.

[16:21] Okay, he's probably not a believer in supernatural things. And if he's a Jew, well, he's associated with Herod, and Herod doesn't think too kindly of Jesus.

And so there's not tons of evidence for this, but it's at least an estimation on my part, and I could be wrong on this one. But I think this guy is like a lot of people.

Notice this on the screen. A lot of people don't believe in God until they need God. A lot of people don't believe in miracles until they need a miracle.

It's very possible that that's what's happening in this guy's life. But here's what we do know based on the text. This man is in a crisis, and this crisis has made him desperate.

Can anybody relate to that? I bet many of you can. So Jesus is clearly going to respond to this man with compassion, right?

[17:21] I mean, that's our Jesus. Amen? He's a compassionate Savior. And so we know that he's probably going to hug the guy. Let's see what he does. Verse 48.

So Jesus said to him, Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. Like, what?

What are we doing here, Jesus? What kind of response is that? Jesus, my son is near death. All you want is a sign.

In fact, the Greek word for you is y'all. And that's not a southern take here. It's actually plural in the Greek.

Meaning, this guy comes up and says, Jesus, my son is sick. And Jesus, talking to the man and everybody else, all you want is another sign.

[18:19] And without a sign or wonder, you won't believe. And these are the kinds of things when I study Scripture that I scratch my head and say, What do you do with that? Why does Jesus seem to be so cold in his response towards this man?

And of course, it's not the first time Jesus responds like this. I mean, do you remember last week? Look back at John chapter 2. This was the miracle we looked at last week. On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee.

And the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus was invited to the wedding also with his disciples, which is kind that he would be invited. And when the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, They have no wine.

And Jesus said to her, Well, this is an important occasion, so let me help. No. Jesus said, Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.

Is that how you talk to mama? It ain't how I talk to my mama, right? Is what would happen to me growing up, right? And so, what is... Now, if you want a full explanation for that, go back to last week's sermon.

[19:26] My point is like, you just want to say like, Jesus, what are you doing responding that way? Let me give you another one in Mark chapter 7, which I think is very similar to the one here in John 4.

This is Mark 7, verse 25. But immediately a woman, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him and came and fell down at his feet.

I mean, that's humility. Now, the woman was a Gentile. She's a Seraphonician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

And what does Jesus say? Unbelievable. Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

What the what? Like, what kind of response is that? Get that in your mind. Here is a woman pleading, my daughter is possessed by an unclean spirit.

[20:25] And you're like the only hope. Will you do something? Why would I even give crumbs to the dogs? Wow. Are you feeling the tension I'm feeling?

What is Jesus doing here? Why is he so cold? He's doing something, and I'm going to prove it to you. He's doing something that's actually very, very important.

And if you've zoned out, zone back in, because I want you to see this on the screen. Jesus often tests crisis faith to make sure it isn't counterfeit faith.

Jesus often will test crisis faith to make sure it isn't counterfeit faith. Now, let me prove that to you, and I think you'll see this from the text.

Let me take you a little deeper into what's happening here in the context of John chapter 4. Go back just a few verses before our passage, verse 43.

[21 : 31] After the two days, he departed for Galilee, for Jesus himself had testified that a prophet had no honor in his own hometown. So he's going back to a place where they don't give him honor.

But now, what's up next is about to seem like it contradicts that. So when he gets to Galilee, you know the place they don't show him honor? The Galileans welcome him. That's a contradiction. Having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast, for they too had gone to the feast. Look at verse 48, where Jesus says to the man in the crowd, unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.

Here's what I'm arguing, and this is what I think he's testing this man on, is that there is in the context a counterfeit faith that's happening. Follow me. Track with me for just a moment here. In John 4, the word of Jesus has gone viral. Twitter is exploding about this man from Galilee. Facebook has crashed over this one who turns water into wine.

[22 : 40] News outlets are reporting about a man who drives people out of the temple. He even started a bit of a revival in a Samaritan village. In other words, listen, listen, when Jesus returns home to Galilee, verse 45, the welcome he's receiving is not the kind of welcome he wants.

Why? What kind of welcome is it? Let me give you some clues that John is dealing with. Look at John 2, verse 23. John 2, verse 23.

Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs he was doing.

But Jesus, on his part, did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man for he himself knew what was in man.

Let me give you another example in John 7. It's what I think is happening in John 4. So his brothers, that is Jesus' brothers, said to Jesus, well, leave here and go to Judea that your disciples also may see the works you are doing.

[23 : 56] for no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, hey, go show the world, Jesus!

for not even his brothers believed in him. What's going on here?

It's actually something, if you know the Gospels, happens very frequently, does it not? Here's what it is. people believe in the miracle, but they don't believe in him as Messiah.

They believe in the miracle, but they're not embracing the Messiah. And there are numerous examples of this, are there not? The crowd wants another meal.

Feed us again, Jesus! But they don't want the bread of life. The Pharisees are amazed. There's no denying that Jesus just raised Lazarus from the dead.

[25 : 01] And they want to kill Jesus for doing that, which has never really made sense to me. Why do you want to kill a guy who raises people from the dead? And yet, they so hated him with their religious hate, they want to kill him even though they can't deny the miracle.

Here's the point, right? Zone in, zone in, zone in. When this official comes to Jesus, Jesus is testing his crisis faith to see if it is counterfeit faith.

That is, do you really want Jesus or do you just want the next miracle? Do you really want Messiah or are you just trying to get out of your situation alone?

Notice this on the screen, faith family. Crisis faith may make you seek Jesus, but crisis faith doesn't guarantee you'll stay with Jesus. And God's people said, amen.

There are lots of people that come to Jesus out of crisis, get their crisis solved, and no longer need Jesus. And that's not real faith.

[26 : 12] That's not real faith. And Jesus is testing this man to see which is it. Are you after the miracle or are you after Messiah?

And you might ask, but what's the big deal here, pastor? Like, why does it matter if you're after a miracle instead of a Messiah? And here's why. Notice it on the screen. Miracles will pass.

Messiah is permanent. Amen? Lazarus dies a second time, poor guy. This boy that gets healed is going to get sick again.

I don't think there's anybody that's 2,000 years old still walking around in the ancient Near East. I don't think, right? If they are, I'd love to meet them. Meaning this guy gets healed, but he's eventually going to die.

The miracle is going to pass. You get fed and you'll get hungry again. That's why, and this is one of my goals in this series, is that you're not after the miracle, you're after the Messiah because the Messiah is permanent.

[27 : 20] He's the bread of life. He's the resurrection and the life. So miracles are meant to get you to the Messiah, not the other way around.

Are you with me? So, I think I've shown you, I think faithfully from the text, why Jesus is cold to him. He's testing him. So now the question is, does the guy pass the test?

Verse 49. This is after Jesus has just said, all you want is a sign and wonder. You won't believe without it. Here's the man's response. The official said to him, sir, come down before my child dies. That's confident faith. This is confident faith. That is, this is the response that Jesus wants to get. This is the response Jesus wants from this man. And there are three things in this response that we see that shows this guy wasn't just after a miracle only.

[28 : 29] He's after Messiah. The first is this. He responds to Jesus in humility. That's why I emphasize that that response that we just read in verse 49 is after Jesus says, if you don't have a sign or wonder, you won't believe.

Meaning, when Jesus says that, his response is, do you not know who I am? Do you not know what I could do to you?

You're a carpenter. You don't talk to a royal official that way. That's not this man's response. This man's response goes like this.

Sir, I don't care about your signs. And I don't care about what the crowd wants. All I know is you're the only hope for my boy.

That's all I know. You are the only hope we have. And that's the response Jesus wants.

[29 : 40] In fact, let me show you how in our example with the Seraphonician woman in Mark 7, the same thing happens. Go back here. Notice it on the screen. Mark 7, verse 27. And he said to her, let the children be fed first for it's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

And she answered him, yes, Lord. But even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. And when he sees that response and hears that humility, here's what he says, verse 29.

And he said to her, for this statement, you may go your way. Sound familiar? The demon has left your daughter. Here's the point, faith family, and it's an important one.

Notice it on the screen. The crowd is looking for a show and the man is looking for a savior. And that's the difference between counterfeit faith and confident faith.

this man needs a savior and he has come to the right place. Amen? That's the first thing we see.

[30 : 51] That is, he responds with humility. Here's the second thing. He accepts Jesus' plan entirely. And listen, some of you are here tonight for this very point.

Look at verse 50. Verse 50. Jesus said to him, go and your son will live. The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.

Here's the point. The guy doesn't respond like, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, that's not the plan, Jesus. No, no, no. The plan isn't go.

The plan is, you coming with me? I need you to go home with me because if not, there may be two deaths, my son and me because my wife's going to kill me if I don't bring you home with me.

Those were the orders I was given. The plan here, Jesus, is you have to come to my home. And Jesus says, that's not the plan. I'm not going with you.

[31 : 52] Go. Your son will live. And what does the man do? Somebody say, preach preacher, so I have permission.

He trusts the plan of Jesus. His plan was come with. Jesus' plan was no go.

And it was okay by him. Isn't that hard for us to do, faith family? Amen? Sometimes we think we know what God should do, heal, and how God should do it.

Come with me. But confident faith, trust God's will over your own. And here's a third thing we see here, is not only does he respond in humility, he accepts Jesus' plan entirely, but thirdly, he leaves obediently.

This is, I wish we had more time on this. I think this is fascinating. Verse 51, as he was going down, so he's not home yet, his servants met him, so they've come out to meet him on the way, and he told him that his son was recovering, and so he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, yesterday at the seventh hour, that's one o'clock, by the way, the fever left him.

[33 : 17] Now you say, why is that so important? It's this, when this man gets the report that his son is healed, he asked them, when did my son start getting better, and what's the response?

Yesterday, at one o'clock, you do the math, a man of this status, who has transportation, no doubt, and is likely just a couple of hours away with that transportation, by one o'clock the next day still isn't home.

Would you stop at Starbucks or something? Wouldn't you hurry home? Wouldn't, like, as soon as Jesus said, your son lives, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, as fast as I can, I gotta get home because I wanna see, but evidently by the next day, by one o'clock, he still headed down.

Why? I think this is beautiful. As far as this man was concerned, the moment Jesus said, your son will live, he had nothing to rush home for. He could stop and get a Starbucks and wash his camel or whatever.

Why? Why? Because he knew and trusted that what Jesus said would happen. Isn't that beautiful? [34 : 39] Isn't that awesome? This guy's so confident in Jesus, he doesn't even rush home. Is your faith confident today? Is your faith confident today?

Let me give you just a couple of things that I hope will encourage you and strengthen you in your faith this evening. We're almost done. Two things quickly that I want to say by way of application is that Jesus cares about your situation.

Jesus really cares about your situation. He may have responded to this guy a bit cold at first because he wants to test the genuineness of the faith, but we know that Jesus cared about this man and here's why.

Again, I think this is important. Listen, come in close, come in close. Jesus did the miracle knowing the miracle would add to the problem of miracle seeking.

You think about that. Jesus, the problem Jesus has is all y'all want his signs and wonders, but he does a miracle even though he knows it will add to the problem of miracle seeking.

[35 : 50] Here's what I mean. This is precisely what the crowd doesn't need because of their counterfeit faith, but it's exactly what this man needed. And his love and care for this man who has genuine faith superseded that of the crowd.

Jesus, Jesus, regardless of what your emotions tell you, cares about your situation. Yes, he does. Amen? And secondly, Jesus has power over your situation.

Jesus has power over your situation. John wants you to see that there is nothing impossible with Jesus. And I'm going to drive that home week after week.

There is nothing impossible with him. John wants you to see this. This boy gets healed, one, with a mere word. All Jesus has to do is say, your son will live, and that fever starts breaking that moment. That's power. And he does this from miles away. Jesus doesn't have to go and touch the boy. He can just say the word from 20, 25 miles and heal this boy.

[37 : 05] And it happens immediately. That was a really weak snap, right? It happens immediately. In that moment that Jesus said the word, the boy was healed.

Listen, listen, everybody right here, everybody watching online, he cares about your situation. He cares about your situation, and he has power over your situation.

One final stage of this man's faith, one final stage of this man's faith, then we're done. In verse 52, almost finished. So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

And then look at this, verse 53, the father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, your son will live, and he himself believed in all his household.

Here's the point, a confirmed faith, a confirmed faith. The man is traveling home, his servants come to him, say his son's better, he said, when did he start getting better?

[38 : 13] It happened yesterday at one o'clock, and the father knew, he knew that was the very hour Jesus said his son would live.

God did that. God did that. There's no other explanation. There's no other rational explanation at all except God did that.

God sent that check, God ordained that sermon, God planned that conversation. Faith family, there are times in life when while our faith is already confident in God, he sends divine confirmations to let us know he is at work.

He is at work in your life. I love this. Notice this on the screen. Sometimes God has already answered your prayer, you just haven't realized it yet.

And some of you, like you're praying and pleading and begging, but you're in today, but you'll find out tomorrow that he's already answered. But know this, he is at work, and he does care.

[39 : 33] And there will be things in your life that just confirm your faith that is already confident in God. I'll leave you with this.

One of my favorite stories happened just off a Starbucks in Times Square. There was a musician there by the name of John Thomas Oaks.

He was performing a lot of cover songs from the 1940s all the way to the 1990s. And at one point, everybody in the Starbucks is singing, If You Don't Know Me By Now.

He's scanning the audience, and he catches the attention of a lady, and he can't quite figure it out, but she's got a beautiful voice.

When the song's over, he looks at her and invites her to come up on stage with him. She's hesitant at first, but finally agrees. What do you want to sing?

[40 : 31] She said, I don't know. Do you know any hymns? And he thought for a few moments, and he's like, how about his eyes on the sparrow?

And she froze like she was in shock. And John proceeded to play, and over the next several moments, that Manhattan Starbucks was filled with this.

When Jesus is my portion, a constant friend is he, his eye is on on the sparrow, and I know he watches me.

When they finished singing, that Starbucks was so quiet, you couldn't hear a cappuccino machine. And the silence was soon interrupted with applause that was so deafening, you would have thought you were at Carnegie Hall.

John turned to that woman, and he said, that was beautiful. And she turned to him with tears flowing down her face, and she said, I can't believe you picked that song.

[42 : 29] That was my 16-year-old daughter's favorite song, who I lost last week to a brain tumor. daughter, I finally know I'm going to be okay.

And she picked up her purse and walked out of the store. God did that! God did that!

God did that! Divine confirmations that strengthen our faith and remind us he is at work in our lives, and there is nothing, faith family, I'm telling you, nothing that is impossible with him.

And so I'm asking you tonight, where is your faith? Are you like the man of John chapter 4? Are you in a crisis? Come to Jesus, not because you need a miracle, but because you need a Messiah.

Come to him, he loves you, and you say, how do you know that he loves me and cares about my situation? The answer is that the good news of the gospel is that the one who caused this father's son to live is the very son the heavenly father allowed to die.

[43 : 59] And three days later, in God's perfect timing, the son lived. And the only way that you can explain that miracle is God did that.

And he did that for you. Divine confirmation so that you would believe.

And all God's people said, amen. Would you pray with me? God, thank you for what you've taught us tonight from your word. Strengthen our faith.

Yes, we may come to you in crisis, but may it not be a counterfeit faith. May it be a faith that needs a savior, wants to follow a Messiah, not just get out of our situation.

And when you sense that we're coming with the right motive because we want Jesus, you strengthen our faith, you confirm our faith, you work in our lives, even when our plan is not your plan.

[45 : 17] But once we realize who Jesus really is, we're okay with that. I don't know where people are at tonight, I don't know what they're going through, but God, you do.

And so I pray, genuinely pray, that you would draw us close, strengthen our faith in Jesus, and may we leave this place confident in our Messiah.

And we pray it in his name, and God's people said, amen.