

The Chapel Ministry



CLEARCREEK
CHAPEL

People Need the Lord

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Savoring the Supremacy of God
Studying the Word of God
Supporting the People of God
Spreading the Gospel of God

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Introduction

Evangelism is under attack today. It is not open warfare, but an insidious pressure against true, Biblical evangelism. It is under attack on several fronts.

➤ Decisional regeneration

Assumes that an affirmative decision for Christ results in the person being born again. Places the locus of initiative for regeneration in the will of man. - Charles Finney

➤ Easy believism

Denial of Lordship of Christ at conversion. Makes simple belief the only criteria for salvation. Turns repentance into an act of the mind. - Charles Ryrie

➤ Evangelical professionalism

Transfers the responsibility to a professional class within Christianity, usually the clergy, evangelists or missionaries. Often, spiritual enablements are used to justify this reasoning.

➤ Theological escapism

The use of a theological truth to avoid a Biblical responsibility. Often encountered in Sovereign Grace circles and is called Hyper-Calvinism.

➤ Redemptive universalism

A loss of the need for the Word of God in faith. The idea that no matter what a man believes, if a part of what he believes is true and leads him to a worship of something which is true to God, God accepts this on the basis of Christ's death. - Clark Pinnock

The end result is all the same - people are not evangelizing. They may be talking about heaven, or making suggestions about God, or calling on people to try God or to make a decision for God, or even presenting a god who is here to solve all their problems.

We desperately need to study the evangelism of Christ for both a model of and a motivation to evangelism.

Religious People Need the Lord

John 2:23-3:21

Introduction

I have a startling proposition from our text this morning. Now, fasten your seatbelts and hang in there and don't bail out before you hear me out.

Do you think that it is possible to believe in Jesus' Name and not be saved? John does. John says that there is a belief in Jesus' Name that does not save. Look carefully at verses 23-24, "Many people saw the miraculous signs He [Jesus] was doing and believed [trusted] in His Name. But Jesus would not entrust [believe] Himself to them, for He knew all men." Any way you look at it, John is saying that there is a way of believing that does not result on Jesus responding. This is particularly vivid against the backdrop of the disciple's believing the Scripture and the Word Jesus had spoken.

Now that's shocking. I will never forget seeing this text for the first time. It shook me and my religiosity and caused me to rethink my faith. I had to ask myself this question, "Do I have this kind of belief?"

Religion: Its Dilemma

(2:23-3:2)

The Situation Described

(v.23-25)

The same root word is translated *believe* and *entrust* in these verses.

Profession of Their belief

(v.23)

A belief merely because of what Jesus was doing for them (miracles) was not a saving belief.

Rejection of Their Belief

(v.24)

Jesus' intimate acquaintance with humanity's heart caused Him not to believe them.

The Bible shows us other examples of a belief that does not actually save. In James 2:19, "You believe that God is one. You do well; the **demons also believe** [that], and shudder." In Acts 8:13, we even have the same kind of belief as Luke write, "And even **Simon himself believed**; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip; and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed. ... 21 'You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart

may be forgiven you. 23 "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in **the bondage of iniquity.**" (NASB)

The Illustration Presented

(v.1-2)

John wants us not only to see this generally, but specifically. It is as though he says to us, "Here is the principle in the crowd. Now let me flesh out for you with an individual. Here is Nicodemus."

Here is a Religious Man

(v.1)

- Pharisee - Conservative, Bible believing, outwardly holy. By any measurement we would use today, Nicodemus is a godly man.
- Ruler of Jews - A theologian, a scribe and a member of the Sanhedrian. Now this is difficult because we do not like to see this sort of mix. But here was a man who was both a Bible student, a teacher and was a religious and political leader of his day.

Here are Religious Words

(v.2)

This man not only has the credentials, but he has the vocabulary right. He acknowledges Jesus as being:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| ➤ Rabbi | Religious equality |
| ➤ Teacher from God | Religious authority |
| ➤ God with Him | Religious authenticity |

Nicodemus fully expected to be accepted, received, and acknowledged as being a man of God. It is quite clear that he thought this of himself, not in an arrogant, puffed-up prideful way, but in all sincerity. His whole religious background had trained him to see himself as a godly man, a teacher and a leader.

I am struck by Nicodemus' coming and expecting to place his approval upon Jesus and finds himself in a bit of a controversy with the Lord. This is ever so often the case with religious people. We come in our religion to approve of Christ and He confronts us with our own need.

Regeneration: their Dialog

(v.3-13)

John records for us the conversation that went on that Judean evening. Jesus simply responds by making a theological statement. Jesus challenges his religious experience with truth.

The Necessity of the New Birth

(v.3-5)

What Jesus asserts or declares is that believing requires that one be born again or from above. The new birth is utterly necessary. If one has not been born again, one:

Cannot See the Kingdom

(v.3-4)

It is impossible even to *SEE* the Kingdom of God without the new birth. This is because the lost are spiritually blind and spiritually dead. Nicodemus shows that he does not see by his reaction in verse 4. Jesus says the new birth is necessary to see; Nicodemus demonstrates it by his blindness (v.4). That blindness exhibits itself in not knowing or understanding truth.

Cannot *Enter* the Kingdom

(v.5)

It is impossible to *ENTER* the Kingdom without the new birth. The reference here to water may be to the Word, something John uses often drawing from Ezekiel 36:24. The emphasis is on the Word and Spirit. Entering the Kingdom of Heaven is by a birth by the Word and Spirit. We cannot enter the kingdom of God dirty and dead. So, there is a cleansing work and a life-giving work.

The Character of the New Birth

(v.6-8)

Jesus carefully describes what the new birth is.

God is active, man is passive

(v.3,5)

Now understand something vital. Jesus does not use an imperative, or a command. He is not here telling Nicodemus to do something. The verbs are aorist passive subjunctive. Jesus is not saying, "You must hit yourself with the ball." Jesus is saying, "You must be hit by the ball." So the statement here is a statement of what is a necessary condition—but it is not something you can do. You cannot birth yourself into the Kingdom of God. As James 1:18 says, "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures." (NASB)

Is produced by spiritual means (v.6)

1 Peter 1:23 reflects Jesus' words here, "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, [that is,] through the living and abiding word of God." (NASB)

The principle stated here is so important in the Scripture and so forgotten in our day. The union of the Holy Spirit with the Word of God in a soul is regeneration. John is showing us the principle on which John 1:12-13 operates. Flesh can only produce what is fleshly. The Spirit gives birth to the spiritual. This is what religious people must learn: the works of the flesh cannot produce the life of the Spirit. Flesh religion cannot produce spiritual reality.

Is basic to the New Covenant (v.7)

Jesus expected Nicodemus to have a grasp of this truth. He actually tells him not to be surprised. He should have understood Ezekiel 36:22-27. The presence of the Messiah and the inauguration of the New Covenant means that God will cleanse His people with the Word and will give them new hearts and will put His Spirit in them. This may be radical to some, but Jesus fully expects that an Old Testament scholar should know about regeneration; that is, the giving of spiritual life by the Holy Spirit.

Is solely under God's control (v.8)

Regeneration is a hidden, inner work accomplished by God's sovereign will that produces a spiritual result. It is a very simple illustration. We can see the effect of the wind on the trees. But have no control on where and how it blows. This is the way the Spirit works. We can see the effect of His blowing life giving air into the soul of a man so that he becomes a living spirit.

The Testimony about the New Birth (v.9-13)

As Jesus explains how these things are so, He exposes Nicodemus' unbelief. Jesus is demonstrating that Nicodemus is not believing in a saving way. Here is the evidence that he is not converted. You are unconverted because:

- Your exposure to truth condemns you (v.9-10). Nicodemus was a religious student and teacher yet was lost. He handled the Scriptures with a dead heart and unseeing eyes.
- Your rejection of genuine testimony condemns you (v.11). This becomes the key issue. True saving belief arising from spiritual regeneration hears, understands and trusts the genuine testimony from of the apostles (which we now have in the Scriptures.)
- Your inability to comprehend spiritual things condemns you (v.12).

- Your not recognizing the Sovereign condemns you (v.13). Jesus here identifies Himself as the Son of Man, an allusion to Daniel 7:13-14 which reads, "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed."

Jesus lovingly and emphatically tells Nicodemus the truth. What He does here is not harsh or unloving. It is exactly what we should do also.

Redemption: John's Discourse (v.14-21)

Verse 14 is the hinge in the text. It is the last of what Jesus said to Nicodemus. Taking it as a text, verses 15-21 are probably John's exposition of these words.

In these words, Jesus begins to develop God's redemptive plan. Notice that He continues to explain even in the face of Nicodemus' apparent unbelief. He uses an illustration from an Old Testament text that Nicodemus should have known very well.

The Focus Examined (v.14-15)

The Comparison

The allusion here is to the bronze serpent being lifted up on a pole in Numbers 21:6-9. Sin was being judged. The serpent was raised up as an emblem of redemption if they would look and live. It is the turning point in Numbers. Chapters 10-20 are filled with failure and defeat. Chapters 22 onward are filled with victory. It was when they learned to look to the saving effects of a lifted up tree that victory came.

The term "be lifted up" was an idiom in Greek referring to death by crucifixion. The key here is the comparison *as*. Jesus' death on the cross is the heart of God's redemptive plan.

The Consequence

In Numbers and in John, there is a "lifting up". In Numbers, one must look to that which is lifted up; in John one must believe in who has been lifted up. The conclusion I draw—and it is supported by the rest of the Bible—is that saving belief, faith is a way of seeing with our understanding.

How then is the belief that saves different from the belief that does not? John shows us that saving belief is looking to a sacrificial death on the cross for life.

So the focus of saving belief on the cross. That is where the crowd went wrong. It is Nicodemus' error. And it is a massive error today. Are we centered on the cross? Or are we searching for signs, miracles and self-centered solutions? Saving *belief looks* intently on the cross of Christ and the Christ of the cross and *having passed* from death to life.

The Foundations Explained (v.16-18)

Why must saving belief focus on Christ and the cross?

The Character of God (v.16)

God loved the world in such a way that He gave His Son. God's love is characterized by sacrifice.

The Purpose of God (v.17)

God saved the world in such a way that He sent His Son. God's purpose for Jesus' first coming is for salvation.

The Condemnation by God (v.18)

God has already placed the world under a condemning verdict. Those who believe have not under this verdict. Those who do not believe, still are. Their unbelief is evidence that they are condemned.

The Fruit Exposed (v.19-21)

How is this so? Why is this so? Here is the way the condemning verdict reads:

The Principle Declared (v.19)

Sinful man is not neutral. He loves his sin. He does not love the Savior. He embraces the darkness rather than the light. He enslaved to the pleasure that his sin gives. You can know whether you having saving belief by what you truly love.

The Product Demonstrated (v.20-21)

Here is the proof.

- Sinners hate God and will not come to God because God exposes them for what they are.
- Believers live by the truth and come to God so that everyone will see that it is God who is at work in them.

If you will not come to God it is because you are sinful, hate God and do not want to be exposed. But if you practice the Truth, you come to God plainly showing that God has done an inward work.

John is saying here that the difference between a belief that does not save and one that does is God's work of regeneration.

Conclusion

- Religion will not save. Many, many people are going to die and perish eternally in hell because they are depending on their religion. It may even be a religion that looks like belief. It may even be a fundamental, evangelical belief. But if it is focused on anything—and I mean *anything*—besides the cross of Jesus, then it is not a saving belief.
- The new birth is not a moral obligation addressed to our wills; it is spiritual necessity arising out of sinful depravity and spiritual death.
- God may be pleased to bless our evangelism. We are given hope and confidence because:

John 7:50-51 Nicodemus said to them he who came to Him before, being one of them, 51 "Our Law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" (NASB)

John 19:39 He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. (NIV)

So here you have it. Here is John's argument:

- There is **religion** and a belief that will not save.
- There is a **regeneration** that is necessary in order to believe.
- There is a **redemption** in which we must believe.

By the mercies of God, believe in Jesus as your Savior and bow to Jesus as your Sovereign, today.

Notes

Magnifying Christ in the Midst of Decline

John 3:22-36

Introduction

I keep asking myself, “Why this story at this point?” As I reflected on this, it struck me that what John is doing is contrasting Nicodemus and John the Baptist. Nicodemus is the example of a **religion** that does not save because there is a **regeneration** that is necessary and a **redemption** that is to be believed. John the Baptist is an example of a authentic belief that professes the greatness of Christ even in the midst of personal decline.

So we are meant to see Nicodemus and John the Baptist side-by-side.

The Exposure of their Heart

(v.22-26)

The problem they faced is a powerfully exposes what is in the heart of the followers of John.

The Parallel of their Ministries

(v.22-24)

The Apostle John is showing us that Jesus’ ministry was much like that of John. He preached. He disicpled. And He baptized. He is in a different location, but they are basically calling men and women, boys and girls to repent for God’s kingdom is near.

The Argument about Purification

(v.25)

John’s disciples get into an argument with a certain Jew about purification. The argument would have arisen because of the clash between the Jewish view of baptism (it was a ritual washing) and John’s view (it was an outward profession of an inward change). It makes sense that this certain Jew was Nicodemus.

In the course of this argument, this Jew (Nicodemus) must have pointed out that everyone was following Jesus now. He must have quoted or misquoted Jesus to make a point. These disciples of John were now very upset.

The Complaint to John

(v.26)

Notice how this complaint exposes these disciples of John.

- They **measure** the success of their ministry by the size of the crowd. They have wrong motives and false expectations. John’s

response to all this is going to show that they simply did not grasp what John the Baptist's ministry was all about.

- They **blame** John for turning people's attention to Jesus. John the Baptist is the one who kept point to Christ. Two of his own disciples are now following Jesus. And this religious and political leader is quoting and possibly following Him. What about us and our ministry?

Think with me about the following observations:

- The difficulties of change tend to expose our hearts. There is nothing like change and difficulty and trials to uncover and unmask our hidden motives and secret thoughts.
- Complaining often arises from false expectations and wrong motivations. We must be very careful to be sure that what we expect is Biblical and spiritual lest we begin to apply our own personal standards and criteria.
- It is very easy to blame leadership for our own failures. You see, these disciples of John did not understand what he had taught them. They had wrong expectations of what his ministry was all about. So rather than carefully thinking and examining themselves, they blamed John. It was his fault that people were following Jesus' ministry rather than theirs.

The Expression of his Faith

(v.27-30)

How does John respond to all this? John replies by articulating the principles on which his life and ministry are grounded.

Its Heavenly Source

(v.27)

John expresses one of the most essential truths for saving belief. God is the ultimate source and supplier of everything in my life. This is true physically and spiritually. I am utterly dependent on His sovereign and holy purposes and providence. All of the resources that are mine have come from Him, must be used as directed by Him and are designed to bring Him glory and honor.

Its Communicated Purpose

(v.28)

John deeply understands his purpose for life and ministry. He has affirmed over and over again that he is not the Messiah—he exists to point to the Messiah. This deeply felt and widely expressed purpose shapes his responses to both success and decline, to the pressure of criticism and eventually, to the prospect of martyrdom.

Its Motivating Joy

(v.29)

I am astounded at the insight of John. He uses an analogy in expressing his joy that is the grand illustration of the glory and gladness of our union with Christ as believers.

Look carefully though at verse 29.

- Our joy is in hearing Jesus' voice. How do we hear Jesus' voice today? We hear it in the Word. It is not some inner voice or impression. When God's Word is read or spoken or heard and reflected on, God's voice is heard.
- Our joy is full when Jesus is magnified. When Jesus is recognized for who He is, then our joy wells up and bubbles over.

John sets the bitterness and complaining of his disciples over against the fullness of his own joy. Some of you are really struggling with this. Your bitterness and complaining has displaced your joy. How you need to hear Jesus' voice and understand His preeminence, not just as words, but as joy giving realities.

Its Unfolding Implications

(v.30)

Now listen to me carefully. Hear what I am saying. John is saying primarily that Jesus' public ministry will grow larger while his grows smaller. He understands that he is now presiding over a declining ministry because God has made it so and his purpose implies that it will be so. And since Jesus will be magnified in it, he can not only just accept it, but also actually be joyful because of it.

Now the reason all this is true is because we will decrease in our own esteem to the degree to which we esteem the worth and value and greatness and supremacy of Jesus. What was happening to John as a reality of ministry was an analogy for a spiritual reality. Self-humiliation always comes in Christ exaltation.

John understands that his life and ministry are to magnify Christ. He is living his life and pouring himself out in ministry so that Christ will be seen as supreme and preeminent. Have we come to where this is an inward reality in our own lives?

- Do we truly grasp our utter dependence on God for absolutely everything?
- Does God's purpose for our lives so grip us that we will remain unshaken in the face of all sorts of difficulty?
- Are we so satisfied with Jesus that we find in Him the fullness of our joy?
- Is sacrificial living the natural outcome of our way of thinking?

The Explanation of this Truth (v.31-36)

The issue for John the Baptist, just as it was for Nicodemus, is this, “How do you respond to Jesus?” This is the central truth in Christianity. It is what makes us Christians. It is what motivates Christians.

Once again, I believe that these verses are not the words of John the Baptist, but are the commentary of the author, the Apostle John. There is a discernable shift in verse 31 into the Apostle John’s way of talking and writing.

Jesus is exalted above all (v.31)

How we must return to this truth over and over again. How we need to declare this truth. Jesus is supreme and exalted.

Jesus speaks God’s truth (v.32-34)

Jesus is God’s truth. Jesus speaks the truth about God. When we believe what God tells us through Jesus, then we affirm the truthfulness of God.

Jesus is the center of God’s love and purposes (v.35)

See how the flow develops? Jesus is exalted and reveals God because He is at the center of God’s love and glory.

Jesus is the difference between life and wrath (v.36)

Therefore, believing in Jesus is the difference between continuing under the wrath of God and having eternal life.

Conclusion

- Nicodemus – God loves the world and gave His Son;
John the Baptist – God loves the Son and gives the world.
- Do you believe in Jesus?
- Do you esteem Him in such a way that humbles self?
- Do we truly grasp our utter dependence on God for absolutely everything?
- Does God’s purpose for our lives so grip us that we will remain unshaken in the face of all sorts of difficulty?
- Are we so satisfied with Jesus that we find in Him the fullness of our joy?
- Is sacrificial living the natural outcome of our way of thinking?

Rejected People Need the Lord

John 4:1-41

Introduction

All societies and cultures have their outcasts. There are those people everywhere who don't fit in. And there are those who intentionally excluded. The social expressions of this are often racially, ethnically or even religiously driven. So we can grow up in society that views and treats black people as being sub-human. Or you can go to the Orient and find that there is a brisk trade in child porn and prostitution. Yet the victims of this horrible practice are left in the street, penniless and broken and diseased. Or you can go to South America and find the streets filled with filthy children scabbling out a living on the crumbs of their begging or from rooting in the garbage or by the selling of what pitiful remains they have because they have simply been dumped by their families.

The horror of sin and fallenness is all around us. We can walk downtown in Dayton and feel just slightly sick at the human waste of the ever-present drunks, druggies and whores. We can sort-of pull up our nice clean righteous skirts and cross to the other side of the street.

Now it is easy to say, this was not Jesus' way. He met every need. If you think that you are sorely misreading the Bible. Jesus passed the poor and the sick and the leprous and blind who clogged the streets of Palestine. But He never turned away from genuine need and cries for real help. Sometimes, His ministry is so full of meeting needs, and travel and pressing concerns that his human weariness brings Him to quiet lakes, and homes away from the crowds and to a stone well on Samaritan hillside.

READ TEXT

The Conditions of the Ministry

(v.1-6)

We must learn to see behind the ordinariness of life the mysterious and moving hand of God's providence.

Why He Goes

(v.1-3)

Jesus changes the location of his ministry based on his rising popularity. That popularity is now gaining the attention of the Pharisees. A lot of what Jesus did and how He went about ministry simply is baffling to the modern mindset. "Here, we are doing well here. There are lot's of people coming into the Kingdom. We are being well received. We are even getting opposition from the right area. So, let's go somewhere else to do ministry." The Apostle John is showing us how

the statement of John the Baptist, “He must increase; I must decrease” (v.30) is God’s providence. (By the way, that verse is not some reference to our own view of ourselves: Jesus must become more in my life while I am becoming less – John is simply predicting a diminishing ministry.)

Where He Goes

(v.4-6)

“Jesus had to go through Samaria.” This was a geographical necessity. The best and shortest route home was a good road that passed through Samaria. Jesus comes to a well-known place, Jacob’s well near Sychar.

Why is this significant? In these paragraphs, as well as in all of Jesus’ ministry, His outreach overcomes the barriers of racial bigotry (v.9), social mores (v.10) and religious expectation (v.39). His ministry is consistently marked by leaving comfort zones and breaking through barriers in order to meet people in their need.

And so, we are brought by Divine appointment to a significant moment.

The Conversation with the Woman

(v.7-26)

Listen carefully to the dialog. Try to hear this as though for the first time. Imagine having this conversation yourself with Jesus.

Issue of the Water

(v.7-14)

Look at how this conversation flows:

Please give me a drink. (Are you thirsty for life?)

Why would you ask me, a vile Samaritan and a woman? (Boy, if you only knew what I was really like!)

If you could really see God’s gift and who I am, you would ask and receive living water. (I thought He was the one who was thirsty.)

How are you going to give me water? (Who does he think he is anyway?)

The water I give is not like a well you come to, but a spring of water on the inside. (If you drink at one, you will not want the other.)

What are the key points John is making?

- We do not see with our understanding God’s gift and God’s Son so we are going to other wells instead of living springs (v.10).

- All wells leave us thirsty. But the spring of living water always satisfies (v.13-14).

Issue of her Wickedness

(v.15-18)

“If that’s the case, give me this water so I will be thirsty and will not have to come back to this old well.”

“Mam, we are talking about more than water and wells. We are talking about spiritual thirst and how we satisfy our thirst. Go get your husband.”

You can almost hear her cringe. “I don’t have a husband.” She covers her sin with a half-truth.

Jesus moves in to expose her sin. She is immoral. And she is not truly thirsty and cannot drink from the springs of living water because she has been drinking from the muddy well of immorality.

Listen to me loved ones. The issue in belief is *always* sin. It is not about personality. It is not about self-fulfillment. It is not about culture. It is not felt needs. It is always about sin. Unbelief is itself sin. Sin is anything that does not please God nor show how great and holy He is. Believing God is how we fight sin. The reason you do not believe God and obey Jesus is that you are satisfied and content with your sin. It may a sweet, carefully packaged, appealing Coke—but it is never living water. Eventually we find that at the bottom is mud and sediment and nasty crawling things—but we still want it.

Issue of His Worship

(v.19-26)

Knowing that He is a prophet because He has exposed her sins, she understands that the primary problem of her sin is worship. I do not believe that this discussion is a diversion. This woman *perceives* that Jesus is a prophet and therefore speaks for God. Her sin is primarily an issue of worship. We have been created for worship, that is, to glorify and enjoy God. Sin keeps us from it. So an awakened sinner’s first question ought to be, “How can I come to God?” How do sinners turn from muddy wells to living springs?

She is most concerned about *where* we worship. She wants to know where is the proper place of worship because that is how she will deal with her sins.

God is most concerned about *how* we worship. God is not so concerned about mountains or buildings. He desires worship in spirit and in truth.

Jesus presents Himself as the *who* we worship. He is the Messiah. He is the One we are to worship because of what all the Scriptures say.

So here are the primary criteria for Biblical worship – We must worship in spirit and truth. And it is our own sins that keep us from worshipping God in the ways that please and delight God. Worshipping is like coming to a bright sparkling fountain. We may praise it. But the best way to commend it is to simply kneel down and drink deeply and say, “Aahh”.

The New Testament does not say a lot about worship, but what it says is important. Biblical worship rests in the context of all the Psalms with their God-ward and God-centered adoration in all varieties of music, instruments and texts (Psalms 149 & 150). We must be worship God, and God alone (Matthew 4:10). The angels are examples of heavenly worship (Hebrews 1:6). Our worship must be full of awe and reverence (Hebrews 12:28). Presenting ourselves as living sacrifices is worship (Romans 12:1). Our present worship must express itself in heaven’s future themes (Revelation 4:8-5:14) and therefore must be in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). And our worship is vain when we teach our traditions and rules as though they were the Word of God (Mark 7:7).

This amazing connection has gripped my soul this week. There is an inseparable connection between the issue of wells and water and the issue of worship. While God offers us satisfying springs of living water, we too often are not thirsting for Him in our worship because we have been drinking all week long at the muddy wells of sinful pleasure.

The Correction of the Disciples

(v.27-38)

The scene shifts to the disciples huffing and puffing up to the well. There are some skeptical and questioning looks on some of their faces. Some of the frowns are turned to the woman as though to say, “What do you want?” Others are turned on Jesus as though to say, “Why are you talking with *her*?” But as usual, they don’t dare say anything.

By the Examples They Saw

(v.27-30)

The disciples need to learn a lesson about wells and springs as well. Biblical witnessing is modeled right in front of them.

- Jesus’ Witnessing – In Jesus they see and hear modeled the heartbeat of Christian witness. Jesus meets the woman where she is, builds bridges with common ordinary talk, comes to the issue while sharing the saving truth. Wonder if any of the twelve of them, going all the way into town and going through the market and coming all the way back witnessed to anyone!

- Woman's Witnessing – The Samaritan woman has drunk deeply from the spring of living water and she runs, leaving her water pot, to tell her story. Here is the simplicity of gospel witness. Tell your story. Point to Jesus. Go and tell so that men and women, boys and girls will come and see.

By the Exhortation They Heard (v.31-38)

“Well, now that she is gone, let's get down to the important thing, food.” Now I know that what we may be seeing here is simply a genuine care and concern for Jesus' physical well being. But Jesus takes their concern and teaches them about His concerns.

- Its Motivating Perspective – The disciples are focused on food. They want Him to eat. Here is the meal. While the Samaritan woman is thirsty and needs living water, the disciples are hungry and need sustaining words. Jesus gets their attention. “I have food that sustains.” “Who brought Him lunch?”
- Its Transforming Principle – Jesus is sustained by serving. He is sustained by doing God's will and work. Not that it replaces the need for food. But too often we do not hunger for God in His will and in His works because we are filled with earthly food.

So He gets them to turn and look down the road towards Sychar. The road has become a field, harvest white with the turbans and headdress of men and women coming to see Jesus. They are going to have a harvest where the woman sowed.

The Confession by the Samaritans (v.39-42)

Here is the harvest: many believed. That is what we are after. We want to drink deeply at the springs of living water and not be satiated with the muddy wells. Then we can witness and extol what we have truly experienced.

Believe the Witness (v.39)

Saving faith involves first believing trustworthy witnesses. They listened to her story and God's Spirit gave them life so that they believed. There must be witnesses. Romans 10:13-15 is clear on this.

But many of you are not witnesses, not because you never say anything, but because your joylessness and your apathy and your self-centeredness do little to commend the mighty spring of living water. Frankly, from some of your faces and your body language this morning, an unbeliever would conclude that the mud puddle may bring better and lasting pleasure than whatever it is you have.

Believe the Word

(v.40-42)

Saving faith also must believe the Words of Jesus. It is clear from this Book that salvation from sin and acceptance with God and drinking deep from the springs of living water is only possible to those who believe what the Bible says.

Saving faith is believing in Jesus. We are not to have faith in faith. It is believing that Jesus is the one and only One through whom salvation comes.

I am standing this morning as a faithful witness. Muddy wells will slake your thirst, like a coke. You may find your life fulfilling, your sin fun and not see the need at all. But these things will eventually leave you empty and lonely and painfully and eternally apart from God. But there is a spring of living water that will eternally satisfy. I know. I have drunk deep. There is nothing like it. It is deep and cold and clear and all we need.

But you must believe the Word. And you must be coming to Christ. And drinking deep in a way that keeps you from muddy ponds and empty wells is worship. Believe in Jesus today.

Conclusion

- Some observations on Jesus' method:
 - Building bridges - the cup of water
 - Exposing sin - go get your husband
 - Telling truth - worship in spirit and truth
 - Describing God - I am He
- John shows us that saving faith is:
 - Satisfied in the worship of God
 - Sustained in the Will of God
 - Believing in the Word of God
- See what keeps us from hungering and thirsting after God:
 - Sinful pleasures keep us from thirsting after God – lost
 - Natural pursuits keep us from hungering after God – saved

Desperate People Need the Lord

John 4:43-5:15

Introduction

The Bible is great literature. Whatever else you think about this book, its depth of material, its poignancy of emotion, its startling unfolding of human character, its intricate structures and long sustain plot line all are hallmarks of a creative genius in its composition. We see here even in the literary skill of the Apostle John.

John is writing a cycle of two's that carry his theme. There are two religious events: a wedding where His power is shown and worship where His purity is shown and His disciples believe His words. There are two religious people: Nicodemus-an unsaved man depending on his religion and John the Baptist-a saved man confessing his belief in Jesus. There are people from two different stations in life-a prostitute and a royal official, believing in Jesus words.

John has shown us the need of a religious man, the confession of a believing man, the salvation of an immoral woman. He is covering the spectrum of human need and station in life. If you are a religious person, you need the regenerating work of the Spirit and the gift of faith and repentance. If you are a believer, you need to continue to confess that Jesus is your savior and sovereign even in decline and difficulty. If you are an immoral person, you need to turn away from wells and muddy pools and turn to the springs of living water in Jesus.

Read Text

But now we are brought to two very different people. One has outward wealth while the other is in grinding poverty. One has position while the other is in destitution. One has vigorous health while the other a debilitating handicap. One has a deep desire for help while the other is full of hopeless excuses.

Yet both are desperate. Both are deeply needy. Both will bring us face to face with Jesus in the most desperate of difficult times.

Have you ever come to this? Whether it shows on the surface or not, do you feel inwardly a sort of panicky helplessness?

- You cannot control your outward circumstances.
- You cannot help your personal situation.
- You have made choices whose consequences are piling up into unsolvable and inescapable problems.
- You are facing an ever increasing onrush of responsibilities that threaten to overwhelm and drown you.

Let's reflect together on these two very different people in very different circumstances who meet Jesus in utter desperation and need.

The Hopelessness of a Child's Sickness (4:43-54)

Even recently, the providence of God has brought us the experience of these paragraphs. I tell you from the heart of parents that there is no pain like watching a little one suffer and enter the dark shadows of the valley of death. These providences of God can bring a sense of desperation like few others. There is an utter helplessness.

The Difficult Circumstances (v.43-47)

In the circumstances of Jesus, He has returned to Galilee where He grew up. For Him, this is a homecoming. But a painful one for He finds unfolding in His own life and ministry the oft-repeated proverb that a prophet has no honor in his hometown. But there is a welcome. They had heard about His purifying of the Temple at the Passover. Jesus goes to Cana where He had done His first miracle of water to wine.

So here He is back home, against all precedent, He is being welcomed and appreciated as a courageous purifier of worship and a powerful provider for the common people. He is confronted by this father who probably was a well-known public official serving in Herod's court. His son is near dying. The word in verse 49 points not just to a small child, but to one who is tenderly loved. He rushes the sixteen miles from his son's sickbed to Jesus' feet for help.

The Tender Confrontation (v.48-50)

Jesus carefully uncovers the wrong reasoning behind the man's request. I do not know if this father understood the depths of the deceitfulness of sinful hearts. But Jesus does. While these words appear harsh to us in black and white, they are like the words to Nicodemus. They are deeply needed to bring life. The son at home in Capernaum may be dying physically, but here is a man who is dead spiritually.

John wants us all to deeply understand our position before God. Jesus points to our tendency to what to see the proof in the pudding, the spectacular, the miraculous. John makes it clear that the words of Jesus have struck deep. Notice this, "The royal official said, 'Lord, come before my child dies.'" Here are the first stirrings of the gift of faith and repentance. Jesus is the Lord and Master of this royal official. Do you see what John is doing? This important public person bows to Jesus' authority and prays.

- No matter what our desperate situation may be, we still must bow to Jesus as Lord and Master. He is supreme. He cannot be coerced

or pressured to do what we want. The only place where Jesus listens is on our faces before His THRONE.

- God knows what combination of outward circumstance and inward work will bring us to our knees before our Sovereign. For this man, it was the impending tragedy of a loved son's death. For you, it may be the onset of an unexplained disease. It may be a financial collapse. It may be the snapping stress of success. It may be the unbearable weight of responsibilities. For some it is the destruction of life's ambition, the disillusion and decay of a failing marriage. It may be shattering wildness of teenage rebellion. And for some, it is penetrating dripping of long suffered daily trials.

No matter what our desperation, we must be brought to bow.

Jesus words to the man move with omnipotent power to save his soul and heal his son. These words bring faith to his heart and health to his child. How do we know this? By what follows. John keeps pounding this lesson home. Saving belief does not rest on signs and miracles. Saving belief rests in the Person and Words of Jesus.

Our translation has it here, "He took Jesus at His Word." He believed the words of Jesus. Here is real, saving faith. He accepted the *word* even though he had yet to see the *deed*.

The Joyful Consequence

(v.51-53)

I love John's sense of "surprise" in his writing. These verses tell us that the man started home the next morning. Now stop and think about that. He wanted Jesus to come immediately because the boy was so near death. Yet he is content to begin the journey home the next day (look at verse 52). Why? Because he believed Jesus. His bowing to Jesus as Lord and believing Jesus word *changed his actions*.

But see this. The father is met on the way by his joyful servants rushing to report the boy's dramatic turn. As they confer, they discover that the boy was healed at the precise time of Jesus' words. The report of this to his servants and his family brings faith and belief and trust to them all. The faith of the father telling what God had done, brought his family to believe in Jesus.

The Pointed Comment

(v.54)

This is Jesus' second sign miracle. In both, Jesus is shown to be the Son of God with omnipotent power. In both, people believe because of Jesus' words. At the turning of water to wine, the disciples believe Jesus words. At the healing of this man's son, a household believes Jesus words.

O that God would move in us in the midst of our desperate circumstances:

- To come to Jesus for help. Let us remember that the man did come to Jesus. I know there are all sorts of substitute helps out there. But God has brought these into your life to cause you to turn to Him.
- To bow to Jesus in submission. May our difficulties drive us to bend our necks and our knees to our Sovereign. When we come to Jesus, we coming to the one who is our Lord and Master.
- To believe in Jesus. Do we take Him at His word? Are we insisting that He do a miracle? Must we have our desperate situation reversed? Faith does not demand, faith accepts and trusts.
- To witness for Jesus. I know that it is easier to witness about Jesus' miracles and healing and delivering and providing power. But can we witness of Jesus' comfort, strengthening, purifying, and sustaining grace in the midst of the fire?

The Helplessness of an Invalid's Handicap (5:1-15)

John has shown us the desperation that brings us to pray to our Savior. Now he shows us a desperation that brings us to pity for our selves.

The Desperate Condition (v.1-5)

Watch as John draws a very graphic image for us.

Think of his *surroundings* (v.1-2). Imagine a large, colonnaded gym with a pool in the center. Now you can't think of the YMCA, but rather of polished marble and sparkling water. Maybe think of a large spa. And then lying all about would all sorts of the sick and crippled and the needy. This is difficult for those who have never been in a third world country to see the deprivation and poverty and desperate helplessness of diseased and handicapped in most of the world. John means to jar us with this picture. In these elegant surroundings lie the stench and sores and sadness of desperate people.

Think of his *superstitions* (v.3b-4). In many of your Bibles, the last part of verse 3 and verse 4 are not there. Scholars question the canonicity of these verses. Frankly, it rings true with John's argument and with the dialog between Jesus and the lame man. John is showing how the popular superstition drew people to this place and the healing powers it might have by angelic visitation. Even the way John records it, you get a sense that this is what was believed but not really what was happening.

Think of his *sickness* (v.5). The details here are interesting. It is not inconceivable that John was able to actually talk to this person at the time he was writing. But he does point out that he had not been an invalid from birth. This man knew what it was to be whole and healthy and able to get around on his own. To be born an invalid and not ever to know the joy of running is not as painful as the long slow deterioration that ends in crippling loss. And he had been like this a very long time. He could look back over 38 years of disease and decline. I am only 41. What would it be like for all of my memory to be filled with painful and pitiful loss?

These are all the elements that paralyze even saints. Our surroundings, our superstitions and our sicknesses. Frankly, loved ones, we are a weak lot today. We need to read the bracing stories of men and women of real faith in the past who withstood immense suffering in order to serve and sacrifice for Jesus.

The Demonstrated Compassion

(v.6-9)

Here is another Divine appointment. Remember, there are all kinds of a multitude of the sick and lame and paralyzed. Yet, Jesus comes to this one man. Here is the mystery of Divine choice in God's purposes and plans.

First, Jesus deals with the *inner problem* (v.6-7). Do not mistake this. We see the man's utter hopelessness. "Do you want to get well?" Seems like a silly question doesn't it? Jesus is not asking this to get information but to do examination. His hopeless condition is made worse by his own sense of helplessness. You can hear in the truth of what he is saying the self-pity. "While I am struggling in my helplessness to get into the pool, others beat me there." Well, my friend, you know what I would do? I would move right up to the edge and camp there and when the water stirred the least little bit, I would flop in. Jesus was unimpressed by this man's whining.

Jesus deals with the *outer problem* (v.8-9). "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk!" These are strong commands. In Jesus' commanding goes the power to heal. Grace and power flow through Jesus' words so that immediately the invalid is healed. Do you wonder what went through the disciples' minds when Jesus spoke these words?

Don't be afraid of the commands of the Bible. In hearing them we receive the grace to do them. This is fundamental to understanding saving belief. We cannot believe on our own. We are utterly helpless and hopeless. Yet, the gospel command is that we believe and repent. Now probably a lot of people around them heard Jesus' command, but the healing and saving power only went into the person to whom it was addressed.

The Decisive Confrontation

(v.10-15)

Now there is a decisive confrontation brewing over what Jesus has done here. Here is a man whose whole life has been turned around and he is breaking a religious rule. I am amazed at how this repeats itself over and over again. I am not at this point going to unpack that.

The decisive confrontation I am concerned with is in verse 14-15. Jesus makes a definite connection between the man's former condition and his past sin. Jesus seeks this man out and meets him worshipping. He is in essence in church. And here is Jesus' message to him, "See what I have done for you? Stop sinning or there are serious consequences awaiting you."

Now listen to me. We have seen that in our desperate situations, we must believe in Jesus. We must bow to Him, take Him at His word and trust Him. That is the lesson of the concerned father. But the lesson of the lame man is that we must obey Him. Saving belief will cause us to be concerned about sin. We will hear Jesus not only commanding our salvation, but also commanding our sanctification.

Let me make one final point. Out of our desperate situations, we must speak of what Jesus has done for us. Sometimes, it will bring about good. We may see the salvation of friends and family. And sometimes, it will stir up anger and opposition. When we believe in an obeying way and tell what God has done for us, some will be glad and others will not. That is what we see here.

Conclusion

Is it becoming clearer what saving faith looks like?

- It is coming to Jesus as Savior.
- It is bowing to Jesus as Sovereign.
- It is believing Jesus' words.
- It is obeying Jesus' commands.

I do not know if your desperate situation is sickness or handicaps or the piling up of sin's consequences. But I do know this. There is only one place to go. And that is Christ. Believe in Him and bow to Him—today.

How To Have Life

John 5:16-47

Introduction

Our story opens with verse 15. Imagine this scene with me. This handicapped man has wallowed in his self-pity all these years. Suddenly, out of the blue, a man comes and asks if he wants to walk. His whining answer almost seems to provoke this man. “Get up, take your bed and walk.” And he does. For the first time in 38 years, he walks. By the time his joy has settled into sensibility, the man has melted into the crowd.

So here he is, walking around with his bed mat and suddenly the whole thing goes sour. It is the Sabbath. Now, we who mow lawns and wash cars and build homes on the Lord’s Day can hardly appreciate the quivering disfavor of the Pharisees. After all, in the Old Testament, a man was taken out and stoned for collecting sticks for – cooking on the Sabbath. It was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant. Besides, the religious leaders had spent almost 2,000 years interpreting and piling up all sorts of idiotic rules. And now this guy is carrying his bed. What’s the deal?

“I’m just doing what the man who healed me told me. And no, I do not know who He is.” Well he found out because later, Jesus caught up with him in the Temple and warned him about his sinning. To me, it is just in character for this guy to go running to the religious leaders (in John’s vocab, “The Jews”) and blame Jesus. Some might even call this tattling.

Well, here we go. There is no doubt that word of other of Jesus’ supposed violations of the Sabbath had circulated among all the religious leaders. So they began to persecute and pursue and pressure Him. John tells us in verse 17 that Jesus says two very important things.

- God is always doing His work on the Sabbath. I’m working like He does.
- What God is doing all along slowly through natural processes (water to wine, disease to health), I am doing immediately and suddenly.

In other words, Jesus is saying that HE IS GOD. Now don’t miss this. All through the Bible, all the Bible writers insist that Jesus believed He Himself was God. People who heard Him speak understood that He was making this claim.

And the religious leadership and most of the common people rejected this as blasphemy. This man walking around with dust on His clothes and sandals on His feet and maybe a breadcrumb in His beard simply

cannot be God. What if I suddenly started to claim to be God? What would you think? What if I healed someone's blindness and then said I could do this because I was God, equal with Him and existing in Him from all eternity? Except when Jesus said it, it was so.

So Jesus responds to them. Why is this massive answer given by Jesus recorded for us?

- Jesus is showing them why they have rejected Him. This is the beginning of the opposition to Jesus that ends in their sending Him to the cross.
- John is showing us how we can believe in Jesus. This text is a part of His presenting of the truths of the gospel so that we will believe and have life through His Name.

To reject Jesus or to have life, there were three crucial issues that faced the Jews, the religious people and the disciples. And these same three crucial issues face us today.

Honoring Christ

(v.19-23)

The Jews thought that they were honoring God by all their detailed rules about keeping the Sabbath. They thought this pleased God. But they were wrong. Jesus is going to show them how to truly honor God.

His Essential Unity with God

(v.19-20a)

Jesus explains how essential and necessary His union with God is. He is not acting independently. He is doing what the Father does. He is doing what He sees the Father doing. Because the Father loves the Son, he will show or demonstrate all that the Father does.

Now I do not pretend to understand fully all that Jesus is giving us here. I wonder if Jesus did not use an analogy here because there is none that really pictures this. So I am going to do this with great trembling. What happens when you stand in front of a mirror? What does the reflection in the mirror do? It does exactly what you are doing. Raise your arm, it raises its arm. So God shows Jesus exactly what God does and Jesus reflects it back, not as a mere image, but as a fully living person in the Godhead. Don't you love the mysteries of the Trinity?

So the life He lives and the miracles He does and the truths He teaches are exactly on earth what God the Father wants Him to do.

His Divine Authority from God

(v.20b-22)

"But there's more," He says. "There are greater things yet to come." When we begin to unpack the rest of the passage, it seems that Jesus

is saying that there is an age of life giving grace and judgement receiving justice that is greater than the age of Law and Sabbaths. Jesus is the One whose life and death and resurrection usher in the age in which we live.

Clearly, the greater works Jesus will do prove He is God because only God can exercise this sort of Divine authority.

- Jesus is Sovereign over life (v.21). To Jesus has been given the authority to give life to whomever He chooses. John is saying that whether you receive life is God's choice, not yours. Jesus gives life to whomever He chooses.
- Jesus is Supreme in judgment (v.22). Whether you have life or reject Christ, you will be judged by Him. You will stand before Jesus who executes the justice of God.

His Central Purpose by God

(v.23)

Why has God done this? Why is Jesus Sovereign over life and supreme in judgment? Because God has purposed that *He will be glorified when Jesus is honored*. Do you see it? The Jews wanted to honor God with all sorts of detailed religious rules added to the Law of the Sabbath. But their religion brought them to the point that they rejected Jesus. And honoring Jesus is how you honor God.

For you today, how much of your religion causes you to reject Jesus when you ought to be honoring Him?

Hearing Jesus

(v.24-30)

Why does this happen? Why did the Jews reject Jesus? That is what these verses are all about. The Jews and all of us as well, reject Jesus because we do not hear.

How do I get that? I get this from just marking the word *hear* in verses 24, 25, 28, and 30 with the final punch in verse 37. It seems to me then that there is something pivotal about *hearing*.

The Pivotal Truth

(v.24)

This verse is where the argument turns from *exposing* the rejection of Christ to *explaining* the reasons for it. It is rich, literally dripping with the fullness of truth.

I cannot escape the way this is put together. Some would read this to say that when you hear and believe you get eternal life. The problem is that it isn't what it says. It says that whoever hears and believes has eternal life and no condemnation. This is so because *he has already passed over from death to life*.

The essential problem of hearing is not deafness, but deadness. The reason people do not hear and do not believe is not because they are spiritually deaf or handicapped—no, it is because they are spiritually dead. The dead cannot hear. The dead cannot believe. They are spiritually dead. This is the consistent testimony of Scripture. The horrible condition of the lost is that men and women, boys and girls are dead in their trespasses and sins. So there must be an impartation of life with the effect that one hears and believes.

The Life Giving Person

(v.25-28)

- Regeneration (v.25) Here is the giving of life into a dead soul. They hear the voice of Jesus and by the Holy Spirit they are brought to life. This is what we call the new birth or regeneration.
- Reason (v.26-27) Jesus gives life because He is God just as the Father is God. Jesus exercises judgment because God has given Him the authority to. Now this sounds all normal and ordinary to those who have been brought up with Christianity, but it was quite shocking to the Jews and is challenging to many people groups today.
- Resurrection (v.28) Jesus distinguishes this giving of life from that of verse 25. This is a giving of life to those who are in the grave and who will come to life to receive their eternal reward and eternal condemnation.

The Judging Power

(v.29-30)

There can be no questioning of the justice of Jesus. He is judging on what He hears from God. And He is doing the will of God to please God and not Himself.

Verse 30 falls like a hatchet on the neck of the religious lost.

- These Pharisees were doing their own spot of judging, but they were not hearing from God. If they had, they would have been honoring Christ.
- These Pharisees, while living by the Law, were not doing God's will. It pleases God for us to do His will in honoring Christ.

All this sounds like grace doesn't it? This is sheer, amazing grace. God is glorified when the Son is honored. The Son is honored when He gives life to dead sinners so that they hear and believe and have eternal life. All of this is to bring God pleasure and delight. All this magnifies God and is the good news of gladness to a lost and dying world.

Believing Christ

(v.31-47)

The third great issue in rejecting Christ or having life is believing Jesus. Not that these three are separate. They are like three sides of a single triangle. All three must be present. All three were absent in the Pharisees. They did not honor Christ because they could not hear Him, being spiritually dead. Since they could not hear, they will not believe.

The Despised Witnesses

(v.31-37a)

There were plenty of witnesses whose testimony affirmed what was to be believed.

- The Human Testimony of John – John the Baptist had been clear in his message and even somewhat enjoyed for a season. Human testimony to Divine truth is not necessary for Divine truth to be true. But it is necessary for men to be saved.
- The Powerful Testimony of His Miracles – The aim of Jesus' miracles was to certify His deity. The whole of Jesus' saving work in His holy life and sacrificial death announce clearly that God sent Him.
- The Heavenly Testimony of His Father – Throughout Jesus' life and ministry, God the Father spoke directly and audibly to authenticate Jesus as God's Beloved Son.

The Decisive Indictment

(v.37b-40)

In the face of all this direct and personal testimony, the Pharisees simply didn't get it. They never believed. They never heard, nor saw nor did God's Word settle down in them and change them. They were immensely religious, but lost.

In fact, they were diligent students of the Bible. They thought that Bible knowledge was sufficient for salvation. Though they studied the Scriptures and the Scriptures are all about Jesus, they would not come to Jesus.

What a sad indictment of these Pharisees. But it is no less true today. There are men and women filling church pews and chairs all around the world today who are even diligent students of the Bible, *but who will not come to Jesus*. Now they think they are. They have manufactured their own Jesus. The Jesus of the Bible is the Divine Son of God, who is the Sovereign over life and Supreme in judgment. Listen to me. If you are not coming to the Jesus and to the God of the Bible, you are simply coming to an idol.

Saving belief hears the testimony that Jesus is God, sees it in the Scripture and then inwardly and spiritually comes to Jesus for life.

The Dangerous Obstacles

(v.41-47)

The key question repeated twice points to the two great obstacles to believing. Verse 44, “How can you believe if you accept praise from men?” and verse 47, “How are you going to believe what Jesus says if you do not believe the Scripture?”

Wanting the Praise of Men

(v.41-44)

Desiring the applause of men keeps us from delighting in the praise of heaven. Let Jesus’ question sink down deep in your heart? How can you believe when you accept man’s praise and do not hunger for the kind of praise that only God can give? The answer? You cannot.

Rejecting the Word of God

(v.45-47)

The Pharisees had placed their hope in Moses. The idea here is that they thought that law keeping would save them. They were seeking to come to God by works instead of by grace. This is not possible, the Bible tells us. Good works cannot and do not save. If I understand this correctly, someday the very good works that you are depending on to be saved will be brought out to accuse and condemn you.

How are we going to believe in Jesus when we do not believe the Bible? We cannot. The only way to believe in Jesus is to believe His Word.

Conclusion

Many of us need a fresh sense of coming to Jesus and honoring Him and hearing Him when we take up our Bibles for study.

How we need the mercy of God. How we must fall on our knees and cry out for the grace of God. How we are dead and depraved and decaying in our sin. How we need Jesus to give us life by His Word and Spirit.

My plea with you this morning is to honor Christ, to hear His voice and to believe in Him today. Be reconciled to God. Turn away from setting your hope on what you do to trusting only in what Jesus has done.

May we glorify God by honoring Christ!