



In August 2018, Pastor John R. Wiuff joined Millarville Community Church as Pastor of Ministry Mobilization. With him, he brought 35 years' experience Pastoring and all that encompasses. His calling crosses many mediums and presents many obstacles which he combats with his well-rounded education and business understanding. Most importantly his immense love for the Lord, and a passion to see individuals find Jesus, Pastor John has set out to get the important things done, disciplining, teaching and encouraging those around him to be truly saved and born again. If this speaks to you and you want to find out more, please look for his manuscripts at the MCC Corner Book Shop or online at [www.millarvillechurch.org](http://www.millarvillechurch.org) under Resources or Sermons.



Pastor John R. Wiuff

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# CHAPTER 1

## John the Baptist & Jesus

### Matthew 3: 1-17

Beth started our Sermon Series off last week with a wonderful message about ‘Jesus at the Temple’ and Vickie King shared a great testimony about how she came to believe in Jesus Christ. We learned from both that you can think you ‘know’ something and then realize you have misunderstood with only the illusion of knowledge. This often leads us to believe the wrong things about life and people. Have you ever had such misunderstandings? They are embarrassing, ...right? I would assert to you today that many have the wrong belief about Jesus Christ, because they think they ‘know’ something when they really have mis-information about the most important person in history.

The most reliable place for information about Jesus Christ is the Word of God found in the Holy Bible. This book has been tested, criticized and scrutinized for thousands of years and still stands as worthy of belief and faith. Countries, law courts, and entire civilizations have built on the revelations found in the Bible and these have withstood the test of time, again and again. The only time the Bible does not make a difference in our lives is when we neglect the Word of God or misinterpret the revelation of God to suit our own pre-conceived notions.

In this series we are exploring the Bible once again the truth about Jesus Christ and His short life on this earth as a living, breathing, historical person. He was both a man and in the physical incarnation of God on earth, God’s very own Son. He was and still is the bridge between heaven and earth for He stands between the two worlds. This is where we find Him every day for this is why He came to die upon a cross for our sins, so we could cross that bridge by faith in Him to a better world next door to this fallen world.

Let me tell you something very startling. Jesus Christ is here today, in this place, with us right now. Although you may not see Him, yet He walks among us. This is His house and we are on Holy Ground. If we pay attention, we may just believe this, and so catch sight of His hand reaching out to us as the bridge between heaven and earth. Not all see with their eyes, but you might believe with your heart.

That you might believe is the name of this series and the reason the Gospels were written. But how can you believe unless you hear, and how can you hear the Gospel of Christ unless we read the Word of God. So, turn with me to Matthew Chapter Three and let us consider when Christ first stepped out into the darkness of this world to reveal the Glory of God.

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1. Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 2. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” 3. For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness,  
‘Make ready the way of the Lord,  
Make His paths straight!’”

4. Now John himself had a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5. Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; 6. and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

Matthew 3:1-17

There are people who can see more than other people, who can hear more than most would even consider possible. We all have ears and eyes, but we often find that our own mouth and opinions get in the way of using our senses to the best use. We have what we call selective attention. When we pay attention to one thing, we ignore all the rest. You have all been misled by politicians and used car salesmen with the very common manipulative technique, and many of us have regrets about falling for such distractions.

Yet there are a few, and I mean a rare few, who are not distracted, who can see what is really going on and are paying very close attention to what is happening all around us. Among these few are an even smaller group who have been given a special ability to see beyond this physical world into the realm of the Kingdom of God. We call these people prophets, and we have some here today. We honor them and respect the ability and responsibility that they have been given, for they point us toward Jesus, so we can see Him for ourselves. They tell us “Look, there He is, follow Him.”

That is what John the Baptist was in the tradition of the last of the great Old Testament prophets who all looked forward to the coming of Jesus Christ. He came from the wilderness of Judea where prophets came from, and he dressed like a prophet recently from the wilderness, eating what prophets find in the wilderness of Judea, both bitter and sweet. Most of all he came speaking the message of all true prophets who want the rest of us to see what they see and hear what they hear. REPENT! From the very beginning the unrepentant hide in bushes from God and evade His presence unless everyone finds out that we are not who we pretend.

The prophet comes to tell us that Jesus is coming and unless we really REPENT, we will not see, hear, or be touched by Him. Since this has always been true, it is best we stop and consider what John the Baptist, and every true prophet, means by the word REPENT!

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The police and certain military trained personnel have a technique they use when interrogating a witness. You could call this the presumption of guilt. They begin with the assumption that everyone feels guilty about something and is carrying around secrets they hope no one will ever discover. They also assume that this feeling of guilt and the fear of discovery can be used to extract a confession from a suspect because that suppressed emotion of conviction wants to confess and be free of the burden.

So powerful is this drive to admit guilt that people under this kind of interrogation will admit to things they never actually did to find relief through confession. The Priest in the Catholic Church fills the role of confessor as people spill their secrets in secret before God. Confession is good for the soul.

Yet when a Prophet comes, he does not come as a priest, or corner you as a police officer in an interrogation looking for a suspect to fit the crime. When a Prophet yells, REPENT he means something very different, something very radical.

John came with this message to REPENT, which is the revelation of the Bible, means to realize you are going the wrong way in your life. You are not just a little bit wrong, you are completely wrong. This is not a call for a renovation, but to burn down your old life and start over, fresh, clean and in a completely different direction. Throw away your old plans, and blue prints, they are no good to you. Give up your arguments and self-justifications. Forget everything you thought you new and admit that apart from God we are blind, lost, dead, and with out any hope. REPENT is a wake-up call to the sleeping to stop dreaming. REPENT is a slap of reality to those living with a delusion. REPENT is a confrontation and an intervention in an addict's life. REPENT means giving it all up and turning away from what you have spent your life seeking.

Why would anyone do this? The Prophet warns that the reality of the Kingdom of God is about to break through our illusions and we feel the consequences. Jesus Christ is coming. He will sort us out and judge each for what they have done. REPENT is the message that gets you ready to encounter Jesus Christ, to see Him for who He really is, and to step from this world of dis-information into the Kingdom of God. Jesus has come and is coming in judgment of this world. He is here, right now.

He is looking not for a confession of a particular sin only, He wants to REPENT and give it all up for Him. To turn around and hold nothing back. Unfortunately, this is too much for some for they believe they have too much to give up.

7. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8. Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; 9. and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 10. The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.



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11. "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Matthew 3:1-17

Have you ever wanted it all, "To have your cake and eat it too?" The proverb literally means "you cannot simultaneously retain your cake and eat it". Once the cake is eaten, it is gone. What good is a cake if you can't eat it? If you keep eating your cakes, you are going to need a good baker. There were some lawyer minded people known as Pharisees and Sadducees that they had found loop holes in the justice of the Universe so that they could have what they wanted and be friends with God by giving Him what He wanted. You know, ...religious people, ...like all religious people to this very day.

The loop hole that religious lawyer types look for is basically this: "How do I give God what He wants so I can have what I want?" So, the negotiations begin and if you are a human being you have made these bargains in your own mind with God. The religious give God money, attendance at religious services, and maybe compliance to some of the less difficult requests made by God. Yet religious lawyer types don't give up something without expecting something in return. They want the usual which is a ticket at heavens gate and acceptance just as they are, but what they really want are blessings now to avoid pain, and suffering. Their personal comfort, in their minds, is a small price for God to pay for their less than heart felt limited compliance.

The kicker is when religious lawyers think that God has not kept his side of this one-sided contract of compromise, then they accuse God of failing and unworthy of their halfhearted, fickle love.

John, being a true prophet, warned the religious lawyers then and today that REPENT meant giving it all up and to no longer make bargains with God. No loop holes, no bargains, no terms of surrender. REPENT means you must want God's will more than your own. REPENT means a willingness to pay any price God asks and to accept any consequence of that decision. REPENT means admitting remorse felt guilt with out excuse, and throwing yourself on the mercy of the court, accepting any judgment given

knowing that the only just verdict is GUILTY! If we would do that John would mark that decision with Baptism meaning we are ready to see what others do not, the coming of the Kingdom of God, the arrival of Jesus Christ.

Do you want to be ready to see the Kingdom of God? Would you like to see Jesus Christ and know Him? Would you like to be touched by Him in your spirit? Would you like to be washed clean of all guilt and sin? Would you like to hear His voice speaking to you and your name upon His lips? This and more you can have, but unless you REPENT none of this can happen. REPENTANCE is not a one-time escape of guilt, it is a

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desperate act of a spiritually dead person to see beyond this world into a better world, to be able to open our hearts, our spirit and our eyes to see Jesus Christ.

This message, and all these messages we are sharing with you in this series is, so you can believe in Jesus Christ. But no matter how long we preach or how much you listen nothing will happen in your life until you REPENT and call out to Jesus Christ. If you will do this, and we are here to help you do this, then you will encounter Jesus and you will believe. If you do not, you will never believe, but only think you know something about God, enough to get by, but you are horribly wrong.

Repenting really isn't that hard. It means simply being honest and admitting to God in a prayer what we already know in our hearts to be true:

5. But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6. who will render to each person according to his deeds: 7. **to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life**; 8. but to those who are *selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation*. 9. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil,

Romans 2:5-9a

Well, I mean ...repentance is not hard, if you find being honest easy. If you find that hard, then it may be the hardest thing in the world.

When we come clean with God in a honest prayer of repentance, no excuses, just confession that we are self-centered narcissistic sinners, in need of a complete change of direction, ...then we are ready to believe and have our eyes opened to the reality of Jesus Christ who came, who is here right now, and is coming in judgment of this world.

13. Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. 14. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" 15. But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. 16. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, 17. and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

Matthew 3:1-17



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John saw and knew Jesus when He came. He was convicted by his own words and was as repentant and in need of forgiveness as any sinner. He saw Jesus and knew His need because **He believed. He could see what others miss, He could hear what others could not, and receive what others were missing. Jesus comes to those who believe.** Jesus went looking for John to begin His ministry, and He has been looking for people who will repent and believe ever since. He is looking here right now for such people. He searches the room for belief that flows from a repentant heart. If you are that person, you can meet Him today. He will reveal Himself to you and you will know Him as He knows you right now.

The barrier between this physical world and the greater reality of the Kingdom of God can be as thin as veil, easily pulled back. It can be as solid as a door we have locked on the inside to keep God out. It can be a great stone that we believe is unmovable as the fate of death, ...but veils can be torn, doors opened, and the stone rolled away. You can believe, seek, ask and knock. You can find, receive, and have the door opened to know Jesus Christ today. REPENT, believe, and then receive. We can show you how at the end of this service.

There are some who want to see and understand the resurrected Jesus, but they don't want to do this by repentance of sins. They want to remain above it all, aloof, and objective. An uncommitted seeker will not find much. If you want to know what sky diving is like you are going to have jump from a plane. Books, videos, virtual reality experiences don't reveal what it really is like. If you want to know what it is like to fall in love and have your heart broken, a romance novel is not going to do it for you, it will only leave you with an empty heart and longings that will never be realized. If you want to be in love romantically you are going to have to take risks and do the dangerous thing of talking to people and inviting them into your life. IN THE SAME WAY, ...if you want to meet Jesus this morning, and encounter Him in a way that removes all doubt, you are going to have to repent of your known sins and ask Him to wash you clean. If you will do that, He will give you the gift of faith, of belief and the Holy Spirit in your spirit.

Jesus Christ the Son of God had no need to be baptized to show He was repentant of His sins, because He had no sin. Yet even Jesus Christ humbled Himself in this way repenting before everyone before He would begin His ministry. The prophet John the Baptist said that humanity had to do this, and Jesus was now fully human even as He was fully God. He shares our dark history and He intended to share our dark end, so that we could know a better future than judgment. If Jesus was willing to share in this act of repentance, is it too much to ask for us to do the same before God and man?

Repentance is about confessing to the one we have sinned against. David said:

”3. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. 4Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight,”

Psalm 51:3-4

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Sin is breaking God's Law, knowingly doing what we know we ought not do because it was against His will for our life. It is the opposite of faith. Faith is believing God and what His Word declares with obedience. If you are not doing that, you are sinning.

23 ...whatever is not from faith is sin.

Romans 14:23 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

There is no neutral, objective, above it all position on repentance according to the Word of God. We have all sinned and it is time we admit it, so Christ can wipe it clean from our lives. Not to repent means to choose the judgment of God which is coming.

Begin a life with a repentant heart search for a new heart created within you by the Holy Spirit will give you faith, hope and love of God. Your understanding will become clear and what God teaches us in the Bible will start making sense. Your physical eyes will be opened, and you will realize you are only just now tasting freedom for the first time in your life. This is Amazing Grace that is beyond the veil, the locked door, and the stone over our hearts. Christ is waiting for you on the other side. One step of faith, an honest confession to God with a repentant heart and you will believe, you will see, and you will receive ...Jesus Christ.



# CHAPTER 2

## Jesus at the Well

John 4:1-42

What does it mean to ‘believe?’ This sermon series we explore the life of Jesus Christ because our goal is to help you believe in Him as Lord and Savior. I am keenly aware that when we use the word believe we don’t use it in the same way. **To say, “I believe you,” is very different from saying “I believe in you.”** This is subtle shift of words in the English that express very different understanding of the nature of a relationship.

Many believe me when I say Jesus Christ existed, died on the cross for our sins, and was raised again on the third day. Would it shock you if I told you that **even the demons of hell believe this?** (*James 2:19 (NIV) “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”*) Very few actually believe ‘in’ Jesus Christ. God’s desire this morning is not to have you believe something about Jesus, but to have you believe **in Jesus Christ as if your life depended upon it, because it does.**

So many of us live in the shallow end of life because it is safe, does not require much commitment, and we can get out quickly if we desire. That is what it is like when you believe something rather than ‘in’ something. If you want to believe ‘in’ something you have to go deeper and commit fully. The vast majority of people in North America who actually attend a church some place or think they are Christians are simply in the kiddy end of the pool where it is a mile wide and an inch deep. Very few find the courage to go deeper where you are no longer swimming but are carried along by the currents into the ocean of God’s plans.

The Bible was written by those who believed ‘in’ Jesus Christ, and therefore it is subjective, personal, and intimate. If you want to believe based on facts and reason you will not come to believe ‘in’ Jesus Christ. This witness of the Word of God is an invitation to a relationship, a deep commitment through a Divine Covenant. Only those who are willing to ‘believe’ in this way will ever come to know Jesus Christ and be known by Him. Is that something you want? It could be the missing key to your life.

This is the theme of our passage today. In this time line we are told that Jesus has met with John the Baptist and shared in the act of repentance. He and his disciples are now preaching repentance like John the Baptist announcing that the Kingdom of God was not just coming but had arrived. As they traveled Jesus sent the disciples to get supplies while He rested alone by a well near Sychar of Samaria. Let’s pick up the story...

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<sup>5</sup> So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; <sup>6</sup> and Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. <sup>7</sup> There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus \*said to her, "Give Me a drink." <sup>8</sup> For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. <sup>9</sup> Therefore the Samaritan woman \*said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, **"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."** <sup>11</sup> She \*said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? <sup>12</sup> You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" <sup>13</sup> **Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."**

John 4:1-42

Wells often had history and even names based on who built and what significant event took place at that location. Naming a well marked right of property in it. To destroy it denoted conquest or denial of right of property (Genesis 21:30-31; Genesis 26:15-33; 2 Kings 3:19; Deuteronomy 6:11; Numbers 20:17; Numbers 20:19; Proverbs 5:15). Jesus was sitting at Samaritan well in a land of compromise and half commitments to the covenant of God. The devoted Jewish leaders in Israel looked down on this region because they considered the people here to be wading in the shallow end of the pool both in religion and ethnic purity. Yet this was 'Jacob's Well' given to the great patriarch 'Joseph.' The name of the well is about as pure Jewish as you can get.

The well is a symbol of life and community. Generations draw from its water and can live in the land around this well. We know wells in the High Country before the foothills of Alberta. A well, its supply of water, and quality of water determines if you are going to live on a parcel of land and what you could do with that land. When this Worship Center was established Glen walked with the driller and being led by the Holy Spirit, they hit water on the first try in just the right location! Glen shared how much water we were getting from the well and a rancher said, "Wow, you could open a feedlot for cattle!" A well is as important and the foundation of our lives and our health for generations.

Some people are content to draw from ancient wells, showing respect for those who dug them and their history. Each of the wells dug by the ancient people of the Bible were dug by faith and in a covenant with God. To be like those people you don't just drink

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form their well, you must share in their faith and trust of the Living God of the Bible! Our Bible is like an ancient well where people look for advice and teaching to tell them what to do and how to do it, some moral compass. In this way we drink from their well. BUT far greater would be to share in their well discovering faith so we can have our own encounter with the Living God from where all life flows.

Jesus asks for a drink of water drawn by a Samaritan Women. Is the water any different depending on who draws the water up from the well? NO! I preach to you from the Word of God, and I draw up the living water of God, so you can drink and believe 'in' the Lord. Anyone can do this! Women, man, or child can share from this well and draw upon the living water of God. This ancient well has much to give. Jesus asks the women at the well share the gift and faith of Jacob and Joseph with Him, implying they are from the same people. This surprised her because so many don't look past the person to the gift of life. She thought who she was would be a wall between them. Jesus comes to break those walls and to give far more than he receives.

**<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."**

Believing 'in' Jesus like your life depended on it begins in the shallow water of knowing about Jesus. Every Born Again believer I have ever met describes their life before as being blind, lost, and confused. Once they were Born Again, and the Holy Spirit moved into their spirit, they describe it as being able to see, understand, and comprehend who God is and wants. It is like flipping on the light switch. Everyone of them would say, "If I only KNEW what it was before, to be really saved, I would have done this much sooner." If the Women at the Well only KNEW who it was she was talking too, and what He had to offer, she would not hesitate to ask for the power of the Holy Spirit in her life.

Here is the thing: You can't really KNOW Jesus, or the gift of a new life in Him, until after you are Born Again. First you have to repent and receive Him on Faith before you can really believe "IN" Him. Before that moment, it is all head knowledge and imagination.

The Woman at the well thought she had already gone deep into Jacob's well. The wells were dug deep to make sure they didn't dry up in this region. She knew how deep the well was and that you needed the right tools to reach the water. That is why she said:

**<sup>11</sup> She \*said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?"**

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You might think you have dug deep into the Word of God and know much about the historical and cultural context of the Bible. You may be a Biblical Scholar and have the tools of the original languages to parse every word and every phrase. You may even know the best and latest writings of scholar who have spent a life time critiquing the words of the Bible, but that is the shallow end of God's Word if you have not gone deeper still into Spirit of God and have drawn the living Word of God. What is the living Word of God? It is the Word the Holy Spirit speaks to you directly when you read the Bible, and He talks to you about your life. When that happens, you have gone deeper. You need the Holy Spirit Living in you to do that. You can only get the Holy Spirit living in you when you are Born Again.

<sup>12</sup> You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?"

Our communities, and our country have drawn from the Bible the very fabric of our culture. We built our laws and the norms of daily life based on the moral code we have found in the Bible. Would you believe me if I told you that is the shallow part of the Bible? One of the reasons we have begun to reject these moral codes of the Bible is because we did not go deeper, and we find it easy to walk away from the restrictions of God's Law. We are no better than the Women at the Well. We know about Jesus, the Bible, and Christianity, but we do not believe 'in' Jesus like our life depends on it.

<sup>13</sup> **Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."**

How do you know that you 'believe in' Jesus like your life depended on it? When you really know Jesus by being Born Again, He becomes the most important person in your life, and you can't imagine life without His daily presence and guidance. Some people here think this and think it is a crutch for the weak. For those who are Born Again, Jesus is not a crutch, ...He is our very life and without Him we would be as good as dead. If you consider Jesus a helper, or simply a way of making your life better, you have not even begun to believe 'in' Jesus as if your life depended upon it. You are still in the shallow end of your understanding. If you were given a choice between water and believing in Jesus Christ, which would you choose? I would choose Jesus because everything I love and hold dear is from Him. What is the point of living another day if He were not in my life?

<sup>15</sup> The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw." <sup>16</sup> He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." <sup>17</sup> The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband'; <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly." <sup>19</sup> The woman said to Him, "Sir, I

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perceive that You are a prophet.<sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”

The woman realized she could have so much more than what she had at that moment. She could go deeper still and this might be her only chance because no one had ever suggested let alone offer her the opportunity to go deeper into faith with God. SO SHE ASKS for what SHE DOES NOT REALLY UNDERSTAND. You don't have to understand to know a mystery like a living relationship with God, BUT you must ask.

The next step after we see our need, is to repent. We learned about this last week in the message about John the Baptist and Jesus. Jesus knew that the women needed to come clean and repent of breaking God's Law before she could be forgiven, washed clean, and be Born Again. We can't live off of other people, their faith and knowledge. We must have our own relationship with Jesus if we want to go deeper still.

The Bible says to: "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well," (2 Kings 18:31) – which meant: **enjoy the love of thine own wife alone**. If we are adulterous in our relationships with others, we will not be faithful to Jesus. When we have divided loyalty we look to other people to give us what we think we need, and this is what the Bible tells us is to thirst for filthy waters, compromised water, ...such a pursuit is suicidal. This is where this woman is at and she needs to repent in order to receive the Living Water.

Friends you cannot create your own religion to your own understanding and go deeper into living relationship with God. You will not know Jesus and He will not know you if you choose self-delusion over believing 'in' Jesus as if your life depended upon it. That is adulterous thinking, it is shallow, and you are uncommitted. You might call yourself a Christian because you got your toes wet, but you are compromised if you don't abandon your home-made version of who you THINK God is or should be. Go deeper and take Jesus at His Word, not yours. Take a leap of faith, and repent ...believing 'in' Jesus will follow.

**<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” <sup>25</sup> The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am *He*.”**

John 4:1-42



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There it is! Did you see it? Jesus reveals the difference between knowing about God and being Born Again! The Samaritans had a compromised knowledge in the shallow end, while the pure Jew had a deeper knowledge of the law and the benefit of keeping it. But deeper still is the moment when we are all the way into a full commitment to Jesus Christ, Born Again, in spirit and truth. This is when we move from knowledge to a living relationship with the Holy Spirit.

We are at the same well right now. We have opened the same Bible that thousands of generations have opened before us. Some find a moral code, and frame work for law and nations so people can live peacefully together. This is good but still in the shallow end of the water.

If you have heard a preacher exegete the scriptures to tell you what you need to do and how you should behave, you know you are in the shallow end when words like ‘should-have, could-have, would-have, and ought to’ come out of their mouths.

To go deep, to find living water, you need to wake up and realize that Jesus is in this room right now, and He is talking to you about you. We are not here to simply talk about Jesus, but to wake you up to realize that Jesus is talking to you about your life, your need to repent, and give up everything to Him as your Lord and Savior. He wants you, all of you in the deep end of the water, where you completely rely on Him for everything in your life. He wants you to plunge into a life with the Holy Spirit, in a relationship that is beyond a point of no return.

Jesus is talking to you right now, inviting you to repent of your known sins, admit them, come clean and surrender everything to Him. This is repentance. Ask Him to forgive you because He paid the price for those sins on the cross. Then Ask Him to come into your spirit with the Holy Spirit so you can be Born Again! You are at the well with Jesus today, and it is different than coming to the well alone. Ask, seek, and find faith in Him while He is here with you, and you will never lose Him or be without Him again. When that happens, you will want everyone to know Jesus like you KNOW Him. You will leave this place ‘believing in’ Jesus as if your life depends upon it, because it really does. This is no crutch, it is a heart transplant.

<sup>39</sup> From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all the things that *I have done*.” <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> **Many more believed because of His word;** <sup>42</sup> and they were saying to the woman, **“It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.”**

John 4:1-42

He is waiting at the well for you to come and believe ‘in’ Him. Leave the shallow end of the pool and go deeper. Don’t just know about Jesus, move to knowing Jesus as a living presence in your spirit. Give your life over to Him today. We can help. Come as we



# CHAPTER 3

## Jesus and the Man through the Roof

Luke 5:12-26

So far, we have focused on barriers that keep us from believing in Jesus Christ based on what is revealed in the Gospels. If we REPENT from our sins, and call upon Jesus Christ to forgive us, then we will be BORN AGAIN so we can believe. We have also learned that believing is not simply knowing or agreeing but giving yourself completely over to the rule of Christ in your life as King of your life.

Today we are going to consider a unique event in the life of Jesus Christ as He begins his ministry of miracles, signs and wonders. This comes after the message of repentance and being born again because it is not as important as these truths for those who would believe. In fact, miracles can cause a barrier to belief.

Let me share with you one of the largest objections to belief in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of our lives. The objection, as I have heard it many times in various ways, is simply this: “If God is a good God, why does He allow the innocent to suffer?” Every human being wonders where God is when life is hard and takes a horrible turn. Our faith takes a real hit when we come to some dark conclusions: “If God allows evil and pain to exist in this world, He is either powerless to do anything, or He is not good.”

I believe in Jesus Christ, His life and ministry. They are recorded in the gospels so we will believe the answers to the question and charges against God. This is an old barrier to belief and goes back to the very beginnings of humanity. This question of wondering why God allows suffering is the entire focus of the book of Job in the Old Testament. Yet the real answer of suffering and God’s response is not revealed fully until the coming of Jesus Christ.

God does answer the difficult questions, but that does not mean we will like the answer. You will find it very hard not to be in an argument with God throughout your life and disagree with Him from time to time. That’s alright, because God can handle it with grace, but will we be able to handle his correction in our heart and behavior with grace as well? We will not know peace and wisdom of God until we do and accept His revelation in Jesus Christ with unreserved faith. That is why we are reading this passage today.

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We find ourselves in the Gospel of Luke Chapter five as we consider the healing of leprosy, sickness, and paralysis. Yet these are not the focus of our study but what we believe about these sufferings...

12 While He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "**Lord, if You are willing**, You can make me clean." 13 And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "**I am willing; be cleansed.**" And immediately the leprosy left him. 14 And He ordered him to **tell no one**, "**But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.**" 15 **But** the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. 16 But **Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.**

Luke 5:12-26

Leprosy **is an infectious** disease that causes severe, disfiguring skin sores and nerve damage in the arms, legs, and skin areas around the body and is caused by a slow-growing type of bacteria called Mycobacterium leprae (M. leprae). However, leprosy is actually **not that contagious**. You can catch it only if you come into close and repeated contact with nose and mouth droplets from someone with untreated leprosy. Children are more likely to get leprosy than adults. There is an estimated 180,000 people worldwide are infected with leprosy, according to the World Health Organization, most of them in Africa and Asia.

**In biblical times, it was almost universally believed that only God could heal.** Even the king of Israel, to whom the king of Syria sent his general, Naaman, for healing, remarks, "*Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy?*" (II Kings 5:7). The prophet Elisha intervenes, suggesting how Naaman could be healed. The belief that only God could heal leprosy is key to Christ's use of this miracle to prove who He was. **TODAY**, we can give a person a pill to kill the bacteria that produces the problem. Two antibiotics (dapson and rifampicin) treat paucibacillary leprosy, while multibacillary leprosy is treated with the same two plus a third antibiotic, clofazimine. Usually, medical professionals administer the antibiotics for at least six to 12 months or more to cure the disease.

**No doctor today can cure this disease with just a touch of a hand.** Bacteria does not recognize such authority. To have this miracle verified by the local authority, a priest at the Temple, would be confirmation of the authority of Jesus Christ. No one delivers like God and His miracles are unmatched. **The difference is that we find pills more reliable and less judgmental.** Yes, it may take 12 months to cure leprosy today, but anyone can be cured who is willing to swallow despite their spiritual belief or moral character. Most people find it easier swallow a pill than their pride.

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The assumption we carry around is that Jesus Christ does not heal everyone, so He is unable to do so, or unwilling. Either reason makes Jesus Christ unreliable compared to a pill which is scientifically predictable/reliable. Then we further assume that if Jesus Christ is able that He refused to heal many because He judges them as unworthy due to the judgment of sin.

There is so much wrong with the way we think about Jesus Christ, I am not even sure where to begin. I believe...

1. God is only one who can heal. God is the only who can make us clean.

I have been a Pastor for a long time and have visited many people in many hospitals for many health problems and challenges. I know for a fact that people are never healed by doctors, only patched up and put together enough to function. The entire medical profession is a band-aid and not a cure. You will die one day no matter how good the Health Care system is and you will die because your body will fail to function. God is the only one who heals because when He heals you never die again, you live forever, AND you are made clean, cleaner than when you first came into this sinful decaying world!

2. Jesus Christ is willing to heal and cleanse us. He is able and willing.

I believe with all my heart that God wants every person free from the consequences of sin, which is separation from God, and physical death. He wants all of us in a state of youth, health, and free of disease, pain and suffering. He is willing to make this happen and died on the cross to make sure it would happen to those who believe in Him as the Son of God, Repent, and are Born Again.

3. God does not favor one sinner over another. We are all equally sinful in his eyes.

I believe that in God's eyes none of us are significantly better than the next person because He judges us by what is in our hearts and not by our actions. We have all been judged and we all come short of the Glory of God. We are all sinners in His eyes with closed hands unwilling to accept what He is offering. There is absolutely no favoritism with God. He treats us all the same.

4. Healing is a private matter between you and Christ.

Unlike some television ministers, I believe that healing is a private matter between you and Jesus Christ. The fundamentals of healing are not in convincing Jesus Christ, because He is already willing, or trying to be good enough because we never will be, and it makes no difference to Jesus anyways. No, ...the core of our healing with Jesus Christ is to open our hearts to the faith He wishes to grow within us. What He wants most from us is our TRUST in Him despite sickness, pain and suffering: that is what FAITH looks like. This is a private matter between you and the work of the Holy Spirit within you.

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This privacy around health and faith is why Jesus tells the leper to tell no one, why Jesus slips away to the wilderness. It is always a concern of Jesus that we don't really come to listen but to get a miracle. We can get a miracle and not get what we really need. It has always been the problem of humanity that we misdiagnose our situation long before Google searches on medical issues. Adam and Eve turned in a face to face relationship with God for the information age of knowing both good and evil. They thought that this is what they needed, and it separated them from God and brought death, disease, and destruction to the world. We are still Googling ourselves to death with misdiagnosis because what we really need is a living and vital faith in Jesus Christ by being born again. This is more important than a physical healing any day.

Jesus went on to make this point in the next part of this chapter.

17 One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and **the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.** 18 And some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. 19 But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus. 20 **Seeing their faith,** He said, **“Friend, your sins are forgiven you.”**

Luke 5:12-26

The Pharisees and teachers of the law were watching Jesus Christ ever since He started preaching REPENT after his baptism by John the Baptist. Then Jesus Christ started healing people and they really started watching Him closely to make sure He was the real deal and not leading the people astray ...a good thing to do!

They had followed the crowd, because they wouldn't have bothered with Jesus if He had not drawn a crowd. He was healing, the power was present, miracles were happening which JOHN DOES NOT MENTION OR DESCRIBE. The only one he tells us about is the unusual story of a man through the roof.

Jesus is set up to perform a spectacular miracle. Very dramatic scene of a man descending into the room by friends, the experts watching, the paralyzed man watching and hoping. The question on every one's mind is: “Can Jesus heal this man, is Jesus willing to heal this man?”

Jesus, “SEEING THEIR FAITH” in His ability to heal, then says: **“Friend, your sins are forgiven you.”** No one expected Him to say that. The statement is stunning because that was not the question they were asking. They want to know if He can heal a paralyzed man and if He will heal the man. This is what matters, and this is why they are all there watching Jesus. They gave up going to work, worshiping at the temple, and destroyed a man's roof to witness Jesus answering these two questions of WILL HE, CAN HE.

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Is this the kind of faith you have as well? Are you always wondering if Jesus CAN and WILL do what you put before Him each day? Are you ready to embrace and reject Him based on what He does or does not do for you today? Is the kind of faith that Jesus see's in you? Jesus does not like this kind of faith that is looking for miracles and for reasons to explain them away. He often said so:

48. "Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

John 4:48

38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." 39 But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Matthew 12:38-39

The trouble with the ministry of signs and wonders is that people quickly loose interest in repentance and being Born Again within. Who wants that when miracles are being handed out so powerfully and generously? The 'signs' which are proof that Jesus CAN and WILL do miracles became more important than the message for us to REPENT and be BORN AGAIN. Jesus knew what was happening. People wanted to have what was broken on the outside but ignored what was broken on the inside. They wanted Jesus to do all the work, and were not interested in the humility and trusting nature of a Godly faith.

Right after the story of the Women at the Well we see this encounter with the Religious leaders who were asking for more signs.

23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. 24 But Jesus, on His part, was **not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men,** 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

John 2:23-25

There will never be enough signs and wonders for an unbelieving heart. The quest for ever greater proof of the claims of Jesus through signs and wonders led them to nail Jesus Christ to a cross while demanding for another sign. It is like a drug where they needed an even bigger hit than before in order to be amazed. Even the resurrection of Lazarus and Jesus Christ from the grave was not enough for many to believe.

Friends, our real issue is not our health, our lack of money, or no hope for a better future. You don't need a miracle, ...a one-time band-aid for something you are not going to keep anyway. Jesus see's what you are putting before Him and He wants to talk about sin, forgiveness and new beginnings ...but we are not listening. All we want to know is CAN HE, WILL HE. No matter what Jesus Christ does, He cannot win with us and we will lose it all before we die.

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A physical healing, a cash windfall, and even cheating death will not fix your problems, because your problems are not really health, money and death. Our real problem is not wanting God's will and a day to day relationship with God guiding, teaching, and directing our path. We want health, money, and a long life so we can do what we want to do ...and that is sin. Why would Jesus Christ want to enable us to become better sinners and help us avoid the consequences of that sin?

We can accept miracles from Jesus Christ, but not His judgments...

21 The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, **“Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”** 22 But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, **“Why are you reasoning in your hearts? 23 Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins have been forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? 24 But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,”**—He said to the paralytic—**“I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.”** 25 Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. 26 They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and **they were filled with fear, saying, “We have seen remarkable things today.”**

Luke 5:12-26

We wonder if Jesus Christ CAN and WILL perform a miracle and give us a sign. Here we see his motive in giving us a sign. They are not given to enable more sin. Jesus is far more interested in us BELIEVING that HE has the authority on earth to forgive sins of those who REPENT of those sins.

**Jesus shows them the miracle so they will believe and talk about the forgiveness of sins. When He does this, they are amazed at the miracle and what they have seen, not the words He asked them to believe by faith: “...so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.”**

You need a miracle! We all do, but it is not something on the outside that is going to break, fall apart and be buried in the ground. We need a miracle on the inside, deep inside where we are dead in our spirit apart from God. Jesus doesn't want to give you another sign, wonder or miracle, ...HE WANTS TO MAKE YOU A FOUNTAIN OF GOD'S MIRACLES. A never-ending stream flowing from within you to a dying, and broken world. He wants to make you a living sign, a living proof, a living miracle that shouts: Jesus CAN and WILL do a miracle in you!

Stop asking Jesus Christ for another proof of His claim over your life. Instead give your life completely over to His control by being Born Again through Repentance! He won't give you a miracle, ...He will make you into a miracle! When the sinner is forgiven, the blind see, and the lost are found there is no end of the evidence needed to BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Savior and Lord over all.





# CHAPTER 4

## Jesus, Loaves, & Fishes

### Matthew 15:29-39

On a good day, we have hopes and dreams of a better life. We think of a larger home, a better car and maybe trips to exotic places or maybe even to fall in love. On a good day we think we could do it, that it is possible.

On a bad day, we wonder if we will ever ‘get ahead’ and wonder why we have such bad luck. We almost feel like we are being singled out from the crowd and punished for some unexplainable reason. On a bad day we feel abandoned and alone.

Are you having a good day, or a bad day? That is the question. We determine how this day is going, the day you are in right now, by how we think the days ahead will turn out. We guess at our future without knowing what is coming or what will happen and based on the uneducated guess we determine if this day is good or bad. Come, let us think together. Does this really make sense to you?

Maybe what we really have is this day and unknown future. We have plans and dreams but who is to say what will happen or how things will turn out despite our best efforts. What we really have right now is today, this moment, the present reality. Could we, just for this moment, not judge today by considering the future? Could we just stop and consider where we are and what we are doing right now? We could take hold of the reality most of us are avoiding and in it find hope as we surrender to faith.

There is a reason many of us look to the future we project, to interpret the present we know right now. In most cases, if we are having another bad day, we want to have a better day if only our circumstances would change. We can only see that happening sometime in the future. Even when we have a good day, we want better days, so that the bad days won’t come again. It is fear that makes us miss the moment, we are in and the reality of our situation.

But there is a better way to live than by fear of the future and that is by faith in the moment you are in right now. That is the theme of our story from the life of Jesus Christ today as we look at the great miracle of the feeding of 5000+ people.

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Turn the pages of your Bibles and read with me from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 15...

29. Departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up on the mountain, He was sitting there. 30. And large crowds came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them. 31. So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

Matthew 15:29-39

Here we have a moment in the life of Jesus Christ. In the past He simply met people where they were and invited them to repent of their sins. What that means is, He invited them to realize that the futures they have planned without God's direction was a mistake and would fail miserably every time because they would not deliver the desired results they were seeking. When we make plans, we are going in the wrong direction because we do know enough about the future to make any intelligent plans. All our thinking about the future is guess work and luck, good and bad.

Repent and do something different. Take this day that the Lord has made, and ask yourself, "What would the Lord Jesus Christ have me do this day?" To live for Father God today is better than gambling on an unknown future. Trust in God today is better than fear of unpredictable luck tomorrow. Faith in God today is not a gamble. This is a sure and real moment you can have right now.

As people trusted Jesus and what He said about repentance, they brought their very real and painful experiences of that moment to Him. He loved them and had compassion on them and responded to their repentance of fear and their seeking faith. He began to heal the ravages of a sinful world upon their bodies because it is rebellion to God that has brought every trouble we have ever known into our lives, beginning with Adam and Eve.

Traveling this way, touching individuals' lives, word began to spread about the miracles and wonders He performed for those who had faith in Him and repented of their sins. Larger groups started following Him, and then the herd mentality started kicking in as other people wondered what they were missing out on and eventually things were getting out of hand with large numbers of people seeking this miracle worker.

The message of Jesus Christ is always the same. Repent and be saved from your sins and you will be forgiven today. Out of this flows every blessing because to truly repent is to seek God's rule over your life today. We have moved in our hearts from wondering about what the future holds, to wanting to know what our Father God wants today.

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**Repentance is the foundation of miracles.** A miracle and its greatness in our mind, is based on how our expectations of the future have been exceeded today. If we are in trouble and the doctors offer us no hope for the future, then our expectations are low enough that if we are healed today, we call it a great miracle! Repentance means you are open to the idea of what God could do today in your life, rather than living in the presence of a frightening future.

What others consider miracles are every day wonders to those who live repentant lives and seek God's rule in the day He has made. Those who live by this kind of faith wonder how others who are unrepentant manage to make it through their lives living by fear of the future.

Those who followed Jesus because of His message of repentance were much smaller in number than the crowd that sought Him for a miracle. At first, they were the same group but as the herd of people who had heard about the miracle worker grew most of them just wanted help today to not repent and keep doing what they always wanted to do apart from God. Others were suffering, and pain has a way of limiting your world to a moment that blinds you to all other good things.

This crowd had grown, and the numbers vary because they didn't have ushers counting how many people were there but by all accounts, from all four gospels, it was at least 5000 and probably more people. That was just the ones who could find Him and travel to the remote place He had chosen to get away from the mob.

Jesus had two great loves. He loved Father God and was one with Him. He also loved us as needy and demanding as we are. He longed to be alone with Father God, without distractions, but His heart was filled with compassion for what sin has done to our ravished lives. So, He healed all who came to him by faith or by their own self-interest, in hopes that we would turn and repent from our devotion to a self-directed sin infected life.

Jesus being in the moment knew God's love and our need to let the Holy Spirit move in power. By faith the seekers received and ***"...the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.***

32. And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the people, because **they have remained with Me now three days** and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way." 33. The disciples said to Him, "Where would we get so many loaves in this **desolate**

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place to satisfy such a large crowd?" 34. And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few small fish."

Matthew 15:29-39

This account of the miracle for the feeding of the 5000 is found in all four Gospels and is the only miracle they all report except for the resurrection of Jesus Christ! Why are there different versions of the Loaves and Fishes story in the Gospels? This is a little bit like asking, "Why are there different look-out points for the Grand Canyon?" The Grand Canyon is simply too large, complex, and majestic to be taken in from one and only one perspective. In the same way, the experience of Jesus is too grand to be limited to one perspective. For this reason, we are blessed to have four Gospels – 4 different perspectives of the experience we call Jesus. Each evangelist tends to focus on a different aspect of the story.

The Apostle John records that the Lord Jesus **specifically turned His attention to Philip**. We know from our study of him, that he was a student of the Bible and interpreted it literally and believed in the Messiah. So, when Christ came to him and said: Follow Me, he embraced Jesus immediately and followed Him without hesitation. That was Philip's spiritual side. His heart was in the right place. He was a man of faith. But sometimes he was a man of weak faith. Then Jesus said to Philip: ***Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat (John 6:5)? Why did the master Teacher single out Philip?***

5 Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, **said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?"** 6 This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. 7 Philip answered Him, **"Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little."** 8 One of His disciples, **Andrew**, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, 9 **"There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?"**

John 6: 5-9

When Philip saw the crowd, he began to feel overwhelmed by the impossible. He was too practical to think outside the box. The reality of the raw facts clouded his faith. The limitless supernatural power of Christ had completely escaped his thinking. Even Andrew's faith was challenged by the immense size of the logistical problem. But Philip lost the opportunity to see his faith rewarded, while Andrew's meager faith was rewarded. **Philip needed to learn to set aside his pragmatic concerns and take hold of the supernatural potential of faith.**

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In all fairness, I have to point out that Jesus Christ setup Philip for a fail, or as I like to call it ...a teachable moment. Jesus asked: **‘Where to buy bread’** which implies that the solution Jesus had in mind was to purchase all that they needed. Philip seems to know exactly how much they had on hand, two hundred denarii to be exact. He could conceive of buying the bread, but it was too little for everyone at that place. Matthew records that the other disciples wouldn’t even know a baker capable of producing that much bread. The logistics of it all, their future plan of attach based on current resources, was impossible to comprehend. What made it worse was the ‘right now need’ was more than apparent.

Jesus got his disciples to fixate on finances and supply of bread. Once they went to that place it looked impossible in light of the need. Andrew on the other hand did not consider what they lacked but looked at what they had. Andrew was in the moment not living in uncertain plans of the future. He had boy who was willing to share five barley loaves and two fish with the 5000+ people who had been without food for three days. Just because what you do have is small in comparison to your fears does not mean we should ignore God’s grace now and in the future.

Now I don’t want you to lose this truth too fast. We are Albertans, for the most part, and know about Oil industry Boom/Bust cycle. After all these years we have learned from our experience and generations before us that our economic future depends, especially in Calgary, on OIL. But this is the great lie. Our future depends on faith in Father God and His providence for today and tomorrow. All good things, everything you have today is from God, and when we Honor Him, we will enter the flow of his miracles.

In these economic downturn times, let us not look JUST to a change in governments and new politicians that can be corrupted. Let’s look to Father God right now for this day’s needs, knowing that He is more aware of our needs in the future than we are. He wants to bless us not only for our own sake but for the expansion of the Kingdom of God! When we forget this truth we are lost, frightened and alone in light of economic uncertainty. Are any of us here today in that place in your heart?

When you are lost, confused, and don’t know what to do, ...here is some practical survival advice. Stop, sit down, remain calm, and let help come to you. If you panic you will get more lost, waste precious energy and resources resulting in rescuers not being able to get to you in time. Fear is your enemy in a survival situation and faith in God is your deliverance. Wait upon the Lord...

35. And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; 36. and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 37. And they all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large

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baskets full. 38. And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

Matthew 15:29-38

When Matthew writes that Jesus had compassion on the large crowd, He is not saying that Jesus felt pity for them. No, the term is far more graphic. Matthew is saying that Christ felt their hurt in His gut.

- He felt the limp of the crippled.
- He felt the hurt of the diseased.
- He felt the loneliness of the leper.
- He felt the embarrassment of the sinful.

And once He felt their hurts, He couldn't help but heal them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. The question among them was, "Should we follow the old shepherds (the Pharisees and Sadducees), or the new one" (Yeshua ha-Mashiach)? Their indecision made them like sheep without a Shepherd (Numbers 27:17; Ezekiel 34:5). In our age we are sheep without a shepherd. We have lost our moral compass. Our leaders have rejected God and want to create a social order that leaves Him out. In our individuals lives many see only religion and don't know Jesus Christ as the shepherd who guides them in the moment and secures their future. We are all like sheep who have gone astray, each on to his own way...

- Sheep without a shepherd cannot find their way.
- Sheep without a shepherd cannot find their pasture and their food.
- Sheep without a shepherd have no defense against the dangers that threaten them.
- Sheep without a shepherd die under their own growing wool when they aren't fleeced.

Out of His compassion Jesus wants to sustain what He has healed. Why give sight to a blind person only to see them collapse from hunger on the way home? There is a story of the Old Testament the offered a solution to this problem that none of the disciples considered a possibility. Not unlike us they thought the Bible was just nice stories that were for the past rather than trying to solve the future with reason. We find the feeding of the hundred in the II Kings 4:42-44 foreshadowed the feeding of the five thousand here.

42 Now a man came from Baal-shalishah and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And he said, "Give them to the people that they may eat." 43 His attendant said, "What, will I set this before a hundred men?" But he said, "Give them to the people that they may eat, for thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat and have some left over.'" 44 So he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the Lord.

2 Kings 4:42-44 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

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But the way He fed the five thousand pictures the way ADONAI always works. **He takes the sacrificial and seemingly insignificant gifts we offer in faith and He multiplies them to accomplish marvelous things.** Now you would think that the apostles would have gotten the point that Christ was trying to teach them. But they evidently did not. Mark tells us: *For they had not understood about the loaves because their hearts were hardened* (Mark 6:51b-52).

If your heart is hardened by what you call ‘realism’ so that you don’t understand a miracle when you see one, I will understand because even the Apostles had trouble. Every day is full of miracles but those who live by faith from day to day are the one who will see, understand and rejoice in each day with confidence in Father God for the next day.

Us realists will be anxious wondering what we should do about the fearful and unknown future. Those who walk by faith only wonder what it is the Lord would have us do today as part of our labor in the Kingdom of God. This is how you can turn a bad day into a good day full of miracles and wonders happening before your very eyes.

Today is the day to repent of our self-sufficiency and to turn to the Lord of all Creation.

31. Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ 32. For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34. “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:31-34

**REPENT** ...and have a good day, ...a miracle filled day!





# CHAPTER 5

## Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles

John 7:1-52

There is are all kinds of reasons not to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died upon the cross for your sins and was raised on the Third Day ...” that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” That should not be too surprising, but what if I told you there is only one good reason to choose to believe in Jesus Christ?

IF it is all true, then we desperately need to believe in Him. Everything we are, have been or will ever become depends upon this choice to believe in Him. If we don’t make this decision out of desperation of a dying man to be saved, then we haven’t made a decision that will make a difference.

If you want to believe, you must make a **desperate decision that will make a difference.**

Don’t be persuaded or talked into believing. Make the choice to believe. Make the commitment to believe. Then you will believe. When you become a believer, you will act like one because you will experience a New Birth spiritually that will transform you from the inside out.

Until then you are an unbeliever. You are filled with doubts, questions, anxieties, and self-absorbed agendas with no real love for anyone other than yourself. You will be at the center of your universe and it will be a very small universe, shrinking before an empty darkness day after day.

So, the question today is “Do you really believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord or don’t you?” The answer is “Yes” or “No”. If you want to say maybe, then you don’t. Believing in Jesus Christ after making a **desperate decision that will make a difference,** changes who you are. The Holy Spirit enters your spirit and your very nature is changed and Jesus Christ called it being Born Again, in our spirit. (John 3)

A person who is Born Again is Holy in his spirit and is influenced in his heart to obey God’s will. You don’t have to convince him to do this, BUT he will act from time to time as if he is not Holy while he loves God in his heart.

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I don't want to be a hypocrite: saying one thing and doing another. You are what you are whether you consistently act that way or not. This is not hypocrisy. Your being is set and created within you, and you can't help but be influenced by that nature. There are others forces in this world that also influence us, but our nature does not change **UNLESS** we are **Born Again**.

Today I want to explore this **desperate decision that will make a difference** as we look at another significant moment in the life of Jesus Christ. We are approaching Easter and the events that led to the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. We see the shadow of these fall upon the words we are about to explore together. Watch for them.

If you look carefully you will also discover that people around Jesus Christ were making decisions about Him that would lead either to an angry yelling '**CRUCIFY HIM**' or pray with repentant tears '**Jesus Is Lord**'. If you dare you might also realize which of these two you are choosing.

This whole story is worthy of study, but since you don't want to be here all day, I have chosen to highlight three controversies. They are:

**Family Controversy:** Jewish leaders did not believe. Brothers did not believe. Unbelief because of familiarity. **Maybe we don't know Jesus as well as we think....**

**5. For not even His brothers were believing in Him.** 6. So Jesus said to them, "**My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune.** 7. **The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.** 8. **Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come.**"

John 7:1-52

Don't you just love family ...or maybe not always. The people you grow up with know all about you from an early age and they create a nice little image of who you are that will never escape how they see you. In my case I was always the younger brother, who needed advice and guidance of older and wiser siblings. Then old prejudice feelings affect our relationships with our family like jealousy, envy, and unforgiveness. Still, they are family and we love each other in strange way.

Jesus had a family where he grew up in the home of Mary and Joseph. He had brothers and we believe sisters. The Gospel of Mark 6:3 and the Gospel of Matthew 13:55-56 state that James, Joses (or Joseph), Jude and Simon were the brothers of Jesus. The same verses also mention unnamed sisters of Jesus. Guess what, they didn't always get along.

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Jesus was the first born and eldest. It is supposed that Joseph, the father of Jesus, died during the quiet years of Jesus' life. Therefore, it fell to the eldest son to step into his role as head of the family and responsible for their welfare. You can imagine what kind of tension that can cause in a family between brothers and sisters.

We see that tension of familiarity flare up in this passage. “For NOT EVEN His brothers were believing in Him.” Has your family ever failed to believe in you? I hope not, but I am afraid that most of us did not have brothers and sisters who believed in us and our potential. Why? Because they thought the boy or girl, they grew up with would always be the limited and flawed person they knew. They did not believe that nature could be changed.

Jesus was not perfect in the eyes of His brothers at this point in the story. They had stories they could tell. To be the actual Son of God, the Messiah, was a bit much and they would have seen this claim as Jesus not only wanting to be the head of the home but of the nation of Israel.

If EVEN the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ did not believe He was the promised Messiah, those who knew Him best, then why should anyone else, including you ...believe in Him?

The brothers challenged Jesus to go to the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. They dared Him to leave to obscure safety of Gentile Galilee and be tested by the austere standards of Jerusalem. They thought he was hiding from the test that would expose him as a pretender, a fraud, or maybe even crazy. ***“If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.”***

Have you been challenged by your brothers and sisters to ‘put up or shut up’ when the big dreams coming out of your mouth did not match the reality of family familiarity? It is said that no one knows you best, then your own family, but is that really the truth? There is a limiting judgment that comes with familiarity.

**When we are familiar with something, we think we know it well and are informed experts. The great tragedy is that this is a family familiarity prejudice that is often wrong.** Have you ever felt wrongfully judged in this way? Jesus must have felt it and was hurt by it like you have been hurt by the words of those who are supposed to love you and believe in you when all others do not.

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Here is how Jesus replies: *“My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come.”*

Jesus will often reveal something about Himself, and although we hear the words, it goes right over our head. We get what the brothers of Jesus were doing. They were making a dare to their older brother. They were daring Him to prove Himself by taking on Jerusalem, the place where all things are judged by the powerful and intellectual elites. **Their family familiarity caused them not to BELIEVE** that Jesus had what it would take to stand up to their testing. Jesus told them that it was not yet “His time.” They probably thought He was ‘chicken’ hearted. Jesus though knew that He was not following a plan He could alter, but one set for Him by God the Father. Jesus would not change that plan even on a dare from His brothers.

You may have challenged God yourself and dared Him. The scriptures call this a ‘foolish test’ and we shouldn’t do such things to those who have a family familiarity. This is not ‘believing’. It is unbelief.

Then Jesus reveals that his brothers can go to Jerusalem any time because they do what the WORLD tells them to do and they believe in what the WORLD says. Jesus does not. He resists the WORLD and condemns the WORLD. He even judges the WORLD of sin. This has a sting to it. He is telling his brothers that they are part of the very WORLD that Jesus opposes. It is this WORLD that will yell ‘CRUCIFY HIM’ when He does go up to Jerusalem and reveals the Glory of God.

The WORLD today is no different. This is a good description of the 1984 novel ‘groupthink’. Groupthink is a psychological phenomenon that occurs within a group of people in which the desire for harmony or conformity in the group results in an irrational or dysfunctional decision-making outcome. When we are caught up in the WORLD’s thinking we refrain from expressing doubts and judgments or disagreeing with the consensus. In the interest of making a decision that furthers their group cause, we ignore any ethical or moral consequences. This is how we take away freedoms, force world views on others, turn journalism into propaganda and crucify anyone who gets in the way.

If you are part of that WORLD, like the brothers of Jesus, you will not believe Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior because **you think you have familiar familiarity with Him, BUT maybe you don’t know Jesus Christ as well as you think.**

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**Public Controversy:** Good man, False Prophet. Unbelief because of controversy, leads to agnostic thinking. **Maybe no one knows Jesus well enough to know....**

10. But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then **He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret.** 11. So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, **“Where is He?”** 12. There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, **“He is a good man”**; others were saying, **“No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray.”**

John 7:1-52

The brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ go the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem as a family to celebrate together as a family and Jesus stays in Galilee of the Gentiles, hiding. Then He does something strange. He secretly goes to Jerusalem. When they get there what does the family of Jesus hear people talking about? JESUS! Everyone is talking about Jesus Christ and debating if He is GOOD or BAD. He heals ...He is good. His claims are too incredible to be true ...He is bad. That about sums up the grumbling.

To settle the question, the answer people who wanted to get to the bottom of this asked: “Where is He?” The brothers of Jesus probably answered, “He was to chicken to show up.”

Yet Jesus was there. He heard what was being said, and He knew people were looking for Him, but He would not reveal Himself. Jesus is a controversial person and is still today. Mention Him anywhere and you will have a controversy. Pray to Him directly in public and you might have a riot or get arrested! This tension of “Is He or isn’t He someone to believe in...” is what we call agnostic, ...or a state of not knowing. Really it is simply people who lack the courage to make a choice to believe one way or another, for fear of the consequences.

**This is not an enlightened point of view** some elites will tell you. This is a frightened indecision of consequences. The trouble is that when we choose not to commit to a Belief in Jesus Christ as Lord, then we have rejected Him as Lord. He is or He isn’t your personal Lord and Savior. Only when we make the courageous choice of a Christian will we Believe.

The trouble with not knowing about Jesus Christ and having a lot of questions is that we think that we have to have answers before belief. **BUT and this is a radical idea for some, BELIEVING A TRUTH IS THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW A TRUTH.** We call the study of knowing an epistemology: the study of the nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge. Faith, or believing in something, is a legitimate epistemology. Reason and experience alone are not enough. All the greatest wonders of life, that make life

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worth living, we know by faith. By faith we know love, hope, joy, peace, freedom, justice, and many more TRUTHS'. By this kind of knowing by faith we reject and judge hate, despair, turmoil, oppression, injustice and many more EVILS'.

The Jesus that is about to be revealed at the right time is not just a person, but the TRUTH. One of the great reasons people don't believe in Jesus Christ is because **no one knows Jesus well enough to know**. The doubt will always remain until you make the **desperate decision that will make a difference**, the decision to Believe by Faith, to know by Faith. If you really want to know Jesus Christ, it can only be by a Desperate Decision of Faith in Jesus as Lord of your life.

**Mental Controversy:** Good Prophet but lacks Credentials. Unbelief because of prejudiced preconceptions. **Maybe we don't know ourselves well enough to know Jesus Christ.**

40. Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, **"This certainly is the Prophet."** 41. Others were saying, **"This is the Christ."** Still others were saying, **"Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?"** 42. Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" 43. **So, a division occurred in the crowd because of Him.** 44. Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

John 7:1-52

Jesus was at the feast in secret and was compelled by God to speak into the ocean of unbelief. Jesus attempted to breath life into the dry bones of the religious festival of booths and many did not like it, but for some, as it could be for you today, it was a revealing that would change their lives forever.

Jesus said: ...on the last day, the great day of the feast, ..." If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. **He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'**"

Much of the unbelief in Jesus Christ had to do with the controversy around Him. Most of us stay away from people and issues that are controversial. We want to wait until it is a settled issue rather than get caught up in the controversy and make a fool of ourselves. Division is a split of the crowd for and against this Jesus. There were those who wanted to settle the controversy of Jesus by arresting Him and showing by force that He was a fake and a deceiver.

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The controversy about Jesus Christ is not really about the reality of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, in the flesh, or that He was crucified, died, and rose on the Third Day. The fight is not even about His judgment of sin and His offer of salvation from the judgment to come. The controversy is really about the consequences of Believing in Him means I have to believe something different about myself. We have a **personal prejudiced preconception** to maintain our own self-image. Jesus Christ **will change how we see ourselves when we accept truth about our real nature.**

If we believe in Jesus Christ as the **TRUTH**, then we must believe that we have followed lies. If we believe in Jesus Christ as the **WAY**, then we must believe that we are lost and confused. If we believe in Jesus Christ as the **LIFE**, then we must believe that we are dead in our sins. If you reject Jesus Christ, it is not because Jesus isn't the way, the truth and the life, ...it is because we don't want to admit we are deceived, lost, and dead in our sins. This is an unbelief because of prejudiced preconceptions as a result of **not knowing ourselves well enough to know Jesus Christ.**

Yet Christ will not be silenced and is still revealing Himself and calling us to make the **desperate decision that will make a difference.** Like those before us we will try to silence Him by yelling 'crucify Him' hoping we don't have to change. Even death will not stop Jesus Christ and the judgment to come. If you want to step out of the doubt of the familiar, the confused, and the controversial ...there is only one way. You must make the **desperate decision that will make a difference. You must choose to believe in Him** repenting of your sins, and asking for the New Birth, ...to be changed on the inside. If you will do this then you will know **from your innermost being, the flowing rivers of living water.**" You will open your eyes every day and say in a prayer: "I know, I believe, and I receive." Choose this day, to believe, to know, and to be transformed. Jesus is calling.



# CHAPTER 6

## JESUS LIVES AGAIN

### Matthew 3:1-17

“He is risen! He is risen indeed!” Every year for over two thousand years Christians have greeted each other in this way. So, let’s try it out, ...I will say the first statement and you will respond with the second: **“He is risen! *He is risen indeed!*”**

Is **“He is risen”** Correct? Mixing present tense and past tense makes this statement sound not correct. ‘IS’ means the present, or right now, while risen means that this happened in the past. How can something happen right now, in this place that happened over two thousand years ago in the Middle East? English demands we say, ‘He was risen’ or ‘He is rising’ but not **“He is risen.”** Modern English no longer uses language like this: it’s an archaic ***present perfect construction*** *now incorrect in current English*. Intransitive verbs used to form their perfect forms with to be + past participle. He is risen; we are fallen; I am come; it is ended; they are departed; ***she is gone***. We still use that last one. In fact, the number of verbs thus conjugated has steadily fallen over the centuries, so that we now use only that last one.

The King James Version of the Bible used this ***present perfect tense*** often:

John 4:25 - The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

1 Cor 13:1 - Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Acts 7:34 ...I have heard their groaning and am come down to deliver them.

Jer 32:2 ...The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness...

The issue here is that the Greeks realized what we are forgetting, that something can happen in the past and still be happening right now, and in the future. This tense is known as a ‘perfect’ tense. The old King James Version of the Bible tried to capture this in its translation of the Greek, but now we drop it from our language. We keep it in our language here on Easter, so we don’t lose the reality of the resurrection!

Paul says that the things that are seen are “temporal”, but the things not seen are “eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18). Our English is being reduce to the temporal and ignoring the eternal causing us to be blind to what is actually happening around us.

Jesus reveals this in Matthew 22 in a discussion with people who believed in the right now and not in the resurrection.

“But about the resurrection of the dead—***have you not read what God said to***



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**you**, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living” (Matt 22:31–32).

Notice how powerfully Jesus applies ancient Scripture to his contemporary audience: **“Have you not read what God said to you.”** Amazing! Even though it was God speaking to Moses in the original event, when Moses sat down to write about that event, **it was God timelessly speaking to every generation who would read that account.** So, it is for us in the twenty-first century: **we are reading what God has said to us! Or should I say ‘is’ saying to us right now!**

Also, notice how subtly Christ proves the resurrection by the verb clause: **“I am** the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”—not, **“I was ...”** **God is not the God of the dead but of the living.** That means that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then, are alive apart from the body, awaiting the resurrection, kept alive in God’s presence until the time for the resurrection comes. Christ’s whole proof of the resurrection in this account amazingly rests on one single present tense verb. When we say **“He is risen! He is risen indeed!”** ...we keep the resurrection present in our understanding so that He can be present in our experience.

Today is a special day, a historical day, and a life changing day. Today is a resurrection day. This is the day we have been waiting for and now it has come! Today you will encounter Jesus Christ and ***all of you will believe, but you will not all believe the same thing about Him.*** **In fact, your belief of Jesus Christ may change several times in the next few moments. This is what it is like to receive a revelation: it is like waking up and becoming more and more aware of your surroundings and reality that you never saw or perceived before. Not all belief is equal and not all belief saves us from the ravages of a sinful world, a sinful soul, and a judgment to come.**

To experience this, we are going to the Bible and the Gospel of John Chapter 20. God is speaking to us through this passage this morning, and if you listen closely, you may even hear your name being called out by Jesus Christ this morning. Listen for it...

1. Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene **came early to the tomb**, while it was **still dark**, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. 2. So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”

John 20:1-23

Believed Jesus **was** dead  
Believed His body **was** stolen

Believing the hard thing gives you a sense of what is real and what is not. To grieve the loss of someone you love is difficult but there is a sense of closure and moving on if you can let go of the dreams you once had and accept the new reality. Mary Magdalene was a devoted follower of Jesus Christ after He had cast out seven demons that were controlling her life.

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She had seen the horror of the crucifixion from beginning to the end. That is how she knew where to find the tomb even in the dark before the sun rise. One great truth was seared into her mind, that Jesus Christ who had delivered her and did so many wonderful things, was now dead and in the sealed tomb.

What could be worse than the death of a dream and of a great faith that had changed her life? The one thing that could be worse is to have that memory of the one good thing stolen, taken, and denied grief. The stone was rolled away from the tomb and that could only mean ‘grave robbers.’

**Maybe you believe that there could be a God and that He might even care, but He is good as dead to you because others have proven your faith wrong and have beaten you down where you have lost hope. Mary Magdalene believed this in those early dark hours of the morning.**

She ran back to those who still cared and called on them to make it right, to find the missing body of Christ.

3. So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb. 4. The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; 5. and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. 6. And so, Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7. and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. 8. So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and **he saw and believed**. 9. For as **yet they did not understand the Scripture**, that He must rise again from the dead. 10. So the **disciples went away** again to their own homes.

John 20:1-23

Believed Body **is** missing but not stolen

When Peter and John arrive at the tomb, they find exactly what Mary reports. They ran to the tomb thinking with the pumping adrenaline the question: “What has happened?” When they arrive, they don’t just look at the stone rolled away but they look into the tomb of Christ. John looks in to see if there is a body, but all he sees is the linen wrappings lying there. Peter enters in and makes a closer examination of the evidence.

This is the criminal crime lab unit going over the evidence. What they find is not just linen, but it is arranged carefully. Peter ran into the tomb and saw “the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen” (NIV 2011). This is a change from the NIV 1984. “The burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.” The ESV has the cloth “folded up” (also HCSB, NLT). The RSV has “rolled up” (also NRSV, NASB, NET).

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**Whether it was folded or rolled up, the point is that robbers had not stolen the body, as they would have given little care for the neatness of the grave clothes.**

Whether Jesus' body simply disappeared, raised as it were through the clothes, or whether the cloth covering his face was neatly placed to the side, the point is that the lie being spread by some of the Jewish leaders was not true.

John is writing this account as the 'other apostle' and records a very personal moment. Confronted with the evidence he enters the tomb and looks closer and realizes two things. Jesus, who was dead, is now missing, and was not stolen by robbers. **He writes that 'he saw and believed.'**

He also writes that he believed the evidence but not the scriptures regarding the resurrection. He did not believe the prophecy of Jesus Christ Himself when He told them that He would rise again on the third day. This was the third day and the body was gone, but all the evidence indicates that the body was not stolen but unwrapped with care and laid aside. He did not believe that this was the very scene he witnessed when Lazarus was raised from the dead and his grave linens removed.

He believed only that the body was gone and not stolen. Despite all this he did not understand what had happened or who did this. This is John who wrote his gospel so that you and I might believe that Jesus died for our sins and rose again on the third day, and he has the courage to tell us that he didn't even believe in the resurrection when confronted with the evidence!

11. But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; 12. and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. 13. And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

John 20:1-23

Believed that she **would not** be able to say good bye.

Peter and John went home because there was nothing else they could do. They brought their searching hearts and desire to do something like find the culprits. They left confused at the evidence believing only that the body was gone and not likely stolen by thief's who meant harm.

Mary approaches the tomb not as the men, but through a veil of tears. When you look upon the pain of this world through tears does it change how you see the world? Are the tears of Mary distortion of her vision or the curtain we pass through to encounter the reality of the resurrected Lord?

When Mary searched the tomb with tears, she saw something different than Peter and John who looked with reason for the evidence. Mary looked with a broken heart, wanting not to find evidence, but Jesus Christ Himself. What she saw was there all along even

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when the men went through, but they did not see the revelation of Angels and of Christ. They did not search for Jesus with tears.

Jesus Christ will reveal Himself to those who seek Him with broken hearts. He always has and always will. While the skeptic and doubter may not see or understand, those like Mary who love, grieve and seek Jesus through the horrors of this world will find themselves in the presence of Angels.

You are in a place like that right now. In the sacred place, as the Word of God is proclaimed, there are angels about us, and the curtain is being pulled back, so you can see and encounter the Kingdom of God. It is our hearts that keep some from seeing and others to stumble into the presence of Christ Himself.

Yet she still did not know or understand what she was witnessing. Her sorrow and grief of losing the last goodbye to Her Savior and Lord was too great. She had enough to be on the doorway to encountering the risen Lord.

14. When she had said this, she turned around and saw **Jesus** standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, “Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.”

John 20:1-23

Believed that she **could yet find** and grieve His body.

Mary wanted to grieve her Lords’ death, and Her Lord wanted to wipe away her tears with joy. We too may be slaves to sin seeking deliverance, and Jesus wants to break our chains. We might be here today filled with the uncertainty of doubt and fear, and Jesus wants to place on the solid rock of faith. We might feel isolate and alone and Jesus wants to embrace us and call us friend. We might even believe we are dying inside empty of all meaning and purpose and Jesus is here calling us by name ...to follow Him.

If you are **desperate enough to turn** from what you have known into the breaking revelation of a resurrected Savior, **you may hear** today what Mary heard. Your name being called...

16. Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (which means, Teacher). 17. Jesus said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’” 18. Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and that He had said these things to her.

John 20:1-23

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Believed **she hears** Jesus call her name.

Believed **she saw** the Lord.

Mary saw Jesus through her tears and that He was the gardener. She was looking for a corpse and not a resurrected Lord. She believed He was dead, and no one comes back from the dead. This is what she believed, and it gave her little comfort.

When she heard her name on the lips of the living resurrected Lord: “Mary...” she knew who He was. She believed she heard Jesus call her name. He is calling your name today. Do you believe this?

The instant she realized by belief that it was Jesus calling her name, her tears of sorrow turned to tears of joy. Hearing she believed. With that hearing the Word of the Lord, her name, she then saw the Lord who had been there all along.

Jesus was and is right now still meeting us at the point of our crisis. He is still calling our name and if we can hear that pull in our hearts, we must just believe that Jesus is not an idea, or a myth, but a reality in this room. If we could believe in our hearts He is calling, then we can answer ‘Lord!’ and began to catch a glimpse of His glory.

There are different kinds of way to believe, but nothing will set you free of this world until you meet Jesus as the resurrected living Lord who is calling your name.

19. So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the **doors were shut** where the disciples were, for **fear** of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “**Peace** be with you.” 20. And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then **rejoiced** when they saw the Lord. 21. So Jesus said to them again, “**Peace** be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” 22. And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “**Receive the Holy Spirit**. 23. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.”

John 20:1-23

Believed that Jesus is living again.

Believed that He is with us now

Believed to receive the Holy Spirit.

Mary reported back to the disciples that ‘Jesus is Risen,’ but they found it difficult to believe her because they feared death too much to make room for faith. Other’s may have told you that ‘Jesus is Risen’ but you have backed away choosing not to believe because it just seemed too much. FEAR is the only reason that people have to not choose faith. Let me ask you, is that any way to live? The only way to overcome a fearful life that is forced upon you is to choose to believe by FAITH in Jesus who has conquered the grave and sin.

Millarville Community Church  
That You May Believe

I tell you 'Jesus is Risen' for I have heard Him call my name. Have you? I know 'Jesus is Risen' because I talk with Him every day. I see Jesus in my life constantly and along with the first disciples I rejoice at His presence. I see 'Jesus is Risen' right now in this room and He is calling your name, urging you to believe and not to doubt. We are all being called to leave the chains of fear and walk in faith.

To all who would make this choice, the choice to believe 'He is Risen', He will forgive your sins, set you free to do the will of God, and give you the gift of the Holy Spirit into your spirit. You will be Born Again, not of fearful flesh, but of a bold faithful Holy Spirit and by the Word of God. All you need to do is make the choice to believe 'He is Risen.' When you receive forgiveness of your sins and are born again with the Holy Spirit in your spirit you will be able to declare without hesitation: 'He **is** Risen Indeed.'