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by Stephen Fenton

The sermon explores the transformative power of Jesus' words and the importance of seeking a genuine relationship with Him beyond mere miracles.

Duration: 50:58

Scripture: John 4:43

Topics: "Surrendering Control", "Faith"

Description

Stephen Fenton emphasizes the transformative power of Jesus' words and the necessity of surrendering control to Him, using the story of the royal official whose son was dying. He contrasts two types of people: those who seek Jesus for miracles and those who come in desperation, highlighting that true faith is about trusting Jesus beyond the signs and wonders. Fenton encourages the congregation to recognize their lack of control in life and to turn to Jesus for healing and salvation, illustrating that crises can lead to a deeper relationship with God. Ultimately, he calls for a response of faith, urging individuals to let go of their burdens and trust in Jesus' power to change their lives.

Transcript

...chapter, it's been such a thrill to my soul, I hope to yours as well, but as we turn to this new section this morning, let's just ask the Lord to open our minds to this Word, okay? Let's pray. Lord, it's only You can make this Word live. Only You.

And so we pray that You will cause it to fall upon our hearts with great power. Where it needs to crush, Lord, cause it to crush. Where it needs to create, cause it to create.

Where it needs to set us free, cause it to break the chains that bind us. Lord, we ask that Your Word will be powerful in our souls today. We thank You for it.

We thank You that what lies behind this book is You. And we worship You today. And it's our desire to get past the words, to see You and to experience You.

So come, come to us, O God, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

We've been at the story of the woman at the well and the story of the Samaritan evangelism that took place after her encounter with Christ. And I said a couple of weeks ago, you know, this chapter is about the power of Jesus' words. That there is something creative in the words of Christ.

That when He speaks to people, it's not just in the ordinary sense. It's an auditory hearing that people have when they hear Jesus speak. That He speaks to the soul.

And when He does, He creates something new. God is always involved in creation. We speak of Christianity as a new creation.

And God is creating a new even today. He does so by speaking His Word. We make a mistake if we think it is just this book that is somehow powerful in people's lives.

It is God. It is as God takes this book and speaks its life. And in doing so, commands new things to be created in the soul.

That people are changed. It's through the living presence of the Holy Spirit that people are changed. It's through meeting Jesus Christ that people are changed.

Otherwise, all the words in this book mean nothing and will not have any impact. But as He speaks, through His Word, miracles. Absolutely.

Miracles happen. And let's just seek the Lord for that as we come to Him afresh. It tells us in verse 43, that after the two days He was in Galilee, and that was the two days that He spent with the Samaritans.

After two days, He left, I should say, for Galilee. And Jesus is leaving for home. This was the region He came from, remember.

And in the very next verse it says, Now Jesus Himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country. That's something He stated when He went to Nazareth and they almost stoned Him there. Tried to take a hold of Him and destroy Him.

And He said, a prophet has no honor in his own country. But it's a funny thing how people are. People are fickle.

Because Jesus had been away from His own country. He had been in Judea and in Jerusalem. And while He was there, He had done miracles.

And there were people from His home region who were there also. That's what it says in the next verse. When He arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed Him.

This is His own people again. They had seen all that He had done in Jerusalem at the Passover feast. So they also had been there.

Now a prophet has no honor in his own country. Jesus had already been rejected. But then He went to Jerusalem.

He was able to express the power of God. God used Him, spoke through Him, changed lives through Him. And suddenly the Galileans who were in Jerusalem looked at Jesus in the holy night.

They said, oh, here's a homeboy who's made good. We're going to go home and talk about that. And then when He heard that He was back again in their own area, they welcomed Him now.

Picture had changed. Their attitude had been revised. Now He was the kid from Galilee who was able to do miracles.

And they welcomed Him. People really pickle. Pickled? Sickled.

There we are. Actually, sometimes people are pickled too. Unfortunately.

But aren't people sickled? It's funny how they change. And so little can change them. And it wasn't really a deep change in the heart, which Jesus identifies here as He continues on.

And as we continue on, it says, once more He visited Cana in Galilee. What had happened in Cana? What did He do there before? Change the water into wine. So here He was back in the same place.

And actually He had just come from Judea when He did that miracle. And here He is again coming from Judea back to Galilee to Cana where He had done that miracle. That's why it says at the end of this passage in verse 54, this was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed having come from Judea to Galilee.

It already tells us in the verse that we've just mentioned that He had done other miracles in Jerusalem. But this is the second time this pattern was repeated. He came from Judea to Cana and did a miracle.

Now He's come from Judea to Cana and He's doing another miracle. He's involved again in miraculous things. And so it says, once more He visited Cana in Galilee where He had turned the water into wine.

And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. Now Capernaum was about 20 miles from Cana. So it's a little hike, especially if you're on your feet.

He probably wasn't. He probably rode a horse. Being a royal official, being noble in his birth, he probably had resources that many of the ordinary people didn't.

When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to Him and begged Him to come and heal his son who was close to death. So we have two pictures of two different kinds of people. The first group of people welcome Jesus because of what He can do.

They have seen His miracles in Jerusalem. They're interested in seeing more. They're not any longer in the space where they will reject Him like they were once when He was in that region.

Now they want to see what is possible because they've seen evidence of His abilities. And there's another man who is also concerned to find out what Jesus can do. In that respect, there is common ground between them.

Both are interested in seeing what Jesus can do. The crowd who saw Him do miracles and this man who came to Jesus traveling 20 miles, riding a horse as hard as no doubt he could in order to get to Christ when he heard that he had reached Cana in order to beg Him, not just to ask, but to beg Him to come and to heal his son who the Bible tells us here was close to death. Two kinds of people.

What I want you to see this morning with me is how Jesus reacted to these two kinds. Because you know what? These two kinds of people still exist today. There are still people who come to Jesus in order to see a miracle.

And indeed, in our generation, this is more true than it's been for a long time. People who have been come fascinated by the fireworks that spiritually people seem to be able to recreate. You go to any meeting where a miracle is promised and you can find hundreds, sometimes even thousands of people gathered.

You talk to Christians who are tired of their way of life because it's empty and it doesn't seem to have any miraculous power and you'll often hear in them a desire to go anywhere where they hear that there is miraculous power at work and they'll travel long distances sometimes and they'll go out of their way in order to find out what Jesus can do. That's true of people who are saved and it's true sometimes of those who are not yet Christians. But there are also those who come to Jesus and they also need to know and want to know what he can do and they come in urgency and they come in desperation like this man.

They come with a deep need in their hearts, in their lives, in their souls and they come to beg him for help. It is so important to notice how Jesus dealt with both of these groups. So important.

The first thing we see happening and it seems strange because it's in answer to the man's pleading. Here is a desperate man. If you have a son or a daughter, if you have a child who's close to your heart, you know what it's like when they're sick.

It's a terrible thing. I hate it when my kids get sick and when they were little it was a desperate time often for me because when I was younger I wasn't a man who trusted much and so if the children sneezed, I thought that they had pneumonia. If they had a bellyache, I was sure that they were going to die of a ruptured appendix.

And I would worry and I would fret and I would fume. Ask my wife, she'll tell you it's true. Ask my kids.

And if you have children, you know what that's like. Oh, you just hear it when they get sick. You wish it was you, not them.

And you do anything to get them to a place where they can get help or where someone can give them medicine or where they can be better. You just, you go any length, go any distance. You know that sense of desperation, you parents.

And here was a boy who was close to death and his father came in deep urgency. And yet to him, Jesus says, unless you people see miracles or unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe. Now, this almost seems hard.

It seems harsh. Until we realize that Jesus is speaking not so much to the man, because he brought this man to him in a particular way and fashion. And I'll speak about that in a moment and how important it is.

But he's speaking to the crowd, many of whom who were there just to see what he could do. And for them, this was an opportune moment. Here was a man in desperation whose son was dying.

Let's see what Jesus will do. Will you go to Cana today or from Cana to Capernaum today? Will you travel the 20 miles? Man, I'll go anywhere to see that. Let's make arrangements.

Let's get lunch settled. Let's take the afternoon off work or the day or the next day, depending on, you know, how long in that culture it would take them to get there. And let's go find out.

I'm ready. I'm in for this. Are you up for the road trip? Let's see what Jesus will do.

Now, to them, Jesus makes this powerful and cutting statement. He says to them, unless you miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe. In other words, he's saying to them, you must have these.

That's what it's all about for you. You're missing the point. You're missing it because he's saying to them, unless you have these things, you'll not even want to believe.

They looked for the spectacular. They were linked to him only by a love for the sensational. And they'd go anywhere.

Man, they'd become the most consistent followers if he could promise a miracle every time he went to another village. And, you know, for a time in Jesus' ministry, for the first half of the three years of his public ministry, that's what happened. Thousands followed him.

Many of them for this reason only. Because he was awesome. Because he was able to express power nobody had ever seen before.

He was able to heal the sick. He was able to make the lame walk. He was able to make the blind to see.

Who wouldn't want to see that? But there were people for whom that became the end and the whole purpose of following him. There were people who stayed on the surface. Remember, a couple of weeks ago, we spoke about how the disciples, even when they were with Jesus in Samaria, they were on the surface.

Here were similar groups of people. Many, many of them. Jesus had become a popular teacher, a popular person, a miracle worker, one who promised signs and wonders.

And he had a huge following because of it. We said to them in this saying, and it's a challenging word, and it wasn't really to the man who was before him. And we know it wasn't because it actually didn't even affect him.

And we'll see that in a moment. He just kept on pleading. He was speaking to those around him who were just waiting with their eyes open, with their eyes wide.

What will he do now? Did you see him make the blind guy see in Jericho? I was there, you know. I happened to be there in business. What do I do now? I see.

To them, Jesus said, this is what it's all about for you. It's just about what I can do. It's just about the surface.

It's just about the outside stuff. There are still many people like that. Even some Christians.

It's just about what he can do. Man, if you are searching to find someone, somewhere who can express power just to show you what God can do, man, you're missing the point. It's not just about what miracles he can do, what signs.

A sign? I mean, let's think about a sign. What is it for? Is it an end in itself? There's a whole movement today, the signs and wonders movement. And people have built whole churches, whole organizations, whole plans on the whole concept that, yeah, God's in the business of signs and wonders.

But what is a sign? What is its function? Who can tell me? To point the way. Yet for people, some of them unsaved people, and at least we can give them some slack here because they just don't know, but even for some saved people, people who are Christians, that's all it's about. They get a buzz.

It's another way to get high. You might as well be doing marijuana because all it is is a spiritual way to get excited. A spiritual avenue to have all of the adrenaline rush that you'd get somewhere else if it gets a real buzz on.

And it's true. There are people for whom that's all it's about. And Jesus wants to challenge those people in Cana for whom that was what it was all about.

And he wants to challenge us because my friends, you missed the point. A sign is to point you somewhere else. A sign has failed if it becomes an end in itself.

A sign is meant to push you onward past the event to the person behind the event. It's that simple. God, of course, will do miracles.

He is still in the business. He has not given up. He has not decided that the age of miracles is over.

I believe that miracles happen every day. We baptize two people who are living miracles today because God has stepped into their lives. But they are not interested simply in the miracle.

They have found the person behind the miracle. And so must you. So must I. And not get caught up in the things that are simply wonders and signs.

God is still doing wonders and signs, but don't get stuck there. And sadly, whole churches get stuck there. And so they'll criticize other churches if there are not signs and wonders happening in the fashion.

Man, I don't care if we never see a sign and wonder, but I delight that Jesus comes to church with us every Sunday. I don't care if I never see a healing, but I am amazed that the Lord Jesus reveals himself to our hearts. And you know what? That's the greatest healing of all.

That we see Jesus. It doesn't matter to me if I never see a lame person walk, or a dead person rise from the dead. Every time someone comes to Christ, the greatest miracle of all takes place.

And God grants it. That's what we see here in Long Creek every Sunday. Then we can jump up and down for the miracles that God is doing, because it's about Him and what He does in the heart, not upon the surface.

Heal a man who is blind. That's wonderful. But if he doesn't see Jesus, he'll still die and go to hell.

Have a man who has leprosy able to walk and have new limbs to walk with, and grow new fingers, have new teeth, and he'll say, that's wonderful. But he may live another 30 or 40 years and then die and go to hell if he hasn't seen Christ and doesn't know who lies behind. Anytime Jesus does a miracle, sometimes there were stories in which people didn't know, one in particular in the New Testament.

The man didn't know, but the Lord led him then into a further encounter with himself. And he discovered what the sign was all about. He discovered the encounter with Jesus.

My friends, you're welcome to all the signs and wonders you want, but if they don't lead you to Jesus, they're meaningless. Absolutely meaningless. And further, they become a curse to us.

They lead people astray, and they lead them into a false sense of his purity, because they forget what the relationship is really all about, or they never discover it. Don't be like that. Go beyond the sign.

Find the Savior. Would you also think with me this morning about the other guy who came. Now Jesus said these words to him, but they didn't affect him.

So look at what it says next. The royal official said, Sir, come dying before my child dies. In other words, I don't care what you're saying about these other people.

Lord, I'm not interested in even getting into an argument with me. I don't have to agree or disagree. You've just got to come.

My child is dying. Okay, whatever you want to say about the rest, that's okay, but you've got to come. Isn't that neat? Jesus did not put him off of the statement, but I'll guarantee that there are a few people around the crowd, as Jesus looked around, who would not give him eye contact any longer.

And there is a period in Jesus' ministry later when he speaks about these things and tells them about the cost of discipleship. It says that many turned their backs on him and walked away, because there is a cost of discipleship, and you know what it is? Everything. And this man was learning about that cost, this other man, and he was learning about how it really works through the crisis that God had ordained in his life.

See, this is the other person that comes with a desire to see what God can do. He comes because of a crisis. And as I am growing in grace, and I have a long way to go, don't get me wrong, and as I look at other people who are encountering Christ, I am learning this simple principle that God almost always, and perhaps someday I'll have to say always, and I'm almost there at that point, almost always he has to use a crisis.

A crisis of some kind has to happen in our lives. Why? Because we are so hardened against him. Why? Because we are so caught up with ourselves.

Why? Because we think that we can function. Why? Most of all, because we think that we can control the world around us, therefore we don't need God. But here was a man who came to Jesus, nothing was in control anymore.

Forget his work, his son was dying. Forget his dreams and plans, forget the vacation to the Dead Sea next summer, his son was dying. Everything went to the side.

He forced his way into the presence of the Lord. He pleaded with him. He said, you must, you must come.

You must touch him. He had heard of Jesus' miracles. He knew what Jesus could do.

He knew that if he would just touch his son, he would live. He said, you have to come. This is what has brought me here.

No longer is my life in control. Now, here was a noble man, the elite of society. Some people surmise here that this may have been Manan, who is mentioned later in Acts chapter 13, who became one of the preachers in Antioch, and it may be the same man.

This may be his initial encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, perhaps. Son-in-law of Herod, a man of great influence, political power, a man of financial ease, who could pay for anything, but he could not keep his boy alive. Do you know how frustrating that must be? People today face the same thing.

I remember standing listening to William Shatner, or sitting listening to William Shatner. Did he die this week? Somebody said to me. No? Is that possible? Somebody else? Somebody said to me they thought he was dead.

I'm kind of glad, because I like him. A few years ago, you remember his wife was killed, tragically? Remember she drowned? I looked at the pictures of this house. It is an absolute mansion.

I watched this man walk down to the gateway, with all these big gates, walls around his mansion, all the press waiting outside. William Shatner is known to be an arrogant so-and-so. He is, that's his character.

Everybody who knows him says that's the way he is, but this was a broken man. He looked into the camera, and he said, my beautiful wife, I don't know what happened. She's dead.

It turns out she was suffering with addiction. She did not get any help. A woman of incredible resource, a family that could pay for anything that was necessary, had the world at their feet, and in a state of inebriation, she fell into her pool and drowned.

Can you imagine how devastating that is? I mean, it's bad enough when the poor die. The deep, deep frustration of those who cannot provide for their children is something that is a shame to the world around us. When there is enough food, when there is enough medicine, but not enough will to do anything about it.

But imagine how frustrating when you've got everything at your fingertips, but suddenly your world slides out of control, and chaos erupts around you because you cannot help what's going on. That's what was happening here with this man, and it was a vital experience, because here was a man, like so many of us, who honestly, before this event, would not have been interested in Jesus, because his life was under control, who would have had no desire to come to Christ and ask Him for anything, because he didn't need anything. I've had so many people say this to me as I've spoken to them about Jesus.

I don't need this. I'm okay. I'm happy.

I've got a good job. I've got a wife. I've got a family man.

I don't need this. How many people have had people say that to them? How many? Many of us have. Perhaps we have said it ourselves, but here was a situation when everything spun out of control.

You see, the big myth of our culture, the myth of human nature, is that we control our own destiny, and it's a myth. It's a myth. It's a lie, but we buy into it.

We think that we've got the rest of this day to live. We think we've got plans that will go into next week and into next month and into next year. It's a myth that we think that our plans are going to happen because we made them.

What a mistake that is. You're not in control of your life. You're not in control of your next breath.

The Bible says that He is the One who holds the keys of death and hell, that He is the One who has knit you together in your mother's womb, that He is the One who has written your days down from beginning to end. When He says live, you live. When He says die, you die.

You are not in control whether you think you are or not, but we live with that lie in our lives, and consequently we don't need the Lord, and that was the way this man would have been in all of his richness and nobility and in his influence and in his power, but suddenly everything spun out of control because he could not help his son. Now it seems like an awful moment, and it was an awful moment, a tragic, challenging circumstance, but it was the best thing that ever happened to him in his life. Why? Why? Because it brought him to Jesus.

God will use crises in your life, not because crises are an end in themselves, any more than a sign or a wonder is an end in itself. He will bring crises into your life because He loves you. He will bring you to an end of yourself because you need to come to an end of yourself.

He will take things and show you that they are not under control so that you will come to Him. He loves you so much. He loves you so much.

He'll do this. He will use crises to bring you to Him, and we don't want that in our lives. We resist that so much.

We try to keep control, and sometimes I love that old movie, Ben-Hur, you know, and of course everybody loves that scene in Ben-Hur where they're going around the amphitheater on them horses and chariots. All you older people remember this movie. The kids don't know what I'm talking about, but it's chaos, and you just see us there spinning around and around, just hurtling around this thing.

Horses and chariots, animals going over, people getting buried under their chariots, people just chariots blowing apart, people being dragged along. I mean, that's life. That's life.

That's the way it truly is. It's not under control. It's one circular, chaotic event which constantly pulls us out of control, and things happen that we simply don't even know where they came from.

We don't know how we got there. We don't know how to get out of it, but it's a good thing if it brings us to Jesus. I don't know what crisis it is in your life, and I don't know what brought you here this morning, but I want to tell you something, that if you're here and there is crisis, it's because God wants you to know you cannot control this.

You cannot make it better. You cannot fix it. Your life is unfixable.

You cannot put anything in place to make it work again. You need Jesus to do the miracle. You need Jesus to come and change things.

The two people that we're baptizing today happen to be recovering alcoholics, and I know they won't mind if we say that because they're not hiding it. We have a number of recovering alcoholics coming to us now in the church, and I'm delighted, but I began to ask the Lord, why are they coming? Why is it that they're fascinated by what's going on in Long Creek? And so I went and I bought the big book so that I could understand the program, and as I did, I began to realize, and I'm only partway through, I'm in the chapter 3a, but even the first, the prefaces of the original editions and the second edition, the prefaces of the third edition, the story of the two co-founders of this organization was enough to show me why it is that God keeps bringing broken people here, and they're not just those who are alcoholics. Some of you here in your book, and it's nothing to do with alcoholism.

It's another addiction, but you're here. Some of you have come here, and you know this is the last chance. We're the last chance hotel as far as you guys are concerned, and that's true.

So many people have been drawn here in that place. Some of you are here because you've been broken in churches. Churches have done you in.

Christians have fried your soul, and you're here to see if there is a place where it won't happen again. Some of you are here because of emotional brokenness, because of nervous disorders or depression. Some of you are here because your marriages have failed, and somehow through the circumstances of that disaster and crisis, the Lord has led you to this spot.

And I believe he's done it deliberately, and I believe that through these doors, he's going to continue to lead these people because of something that he has shown us, and something that he wants us to tell all who come, you cannot control your life. You cannot fix your life. You need a miracle, and we have the person who will do that miracle for you, and he has brought you in your crisis for that very reason.

Listen, one of the co-founders of this movement, listen to what he says. The great fact is just this, this is page 25 of the great book, big book. That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences, which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows, and toward God's universe.

Listen now, the central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves. Every alcoholic who reads that in the big book understands the gospel, whether they know Jesus or not.

Because every alcoholic knows what every human being needs to learn. We don't do life. Life does us.

We will not survive. We can have all the riches in the world, and we'll still die and go to hell. We'll still live in confusion.

Things will instantly spin out of shape and out of kilter, and we don't know what to do, because the truth is we cannot control ourselves. The first step toward freedom in the life of an alcoholic is the place that they come to when they can say, yes, I am an addict, and I cannot fix myself. Hallelujah.

But that same place is the place that every single one of us have to come to, whether we've ever touched a drop of alcohol or not, and God will use whatever Christ sees is necessary, because he loves us enough to bring us to that place where we will say, yes, I am broken, and I don't know how to fix myself. I cannot control this circumstance. And here is a man in front of Jesus.

I can't fix him. I don't know what to do anymore. Please, please come into my life and do something for me and for my son.

That is the first step to salvation, and everyone must take it. Everyone. I became a Christian somewhere in my childhood, but somewhere later on I came to the place as a Christian that I realized I could not breathe without him.

I could not step forward without him. I could not function without him. I cannot think straight without him.

I cannot act. I don't know what to do. Life is not discernible.

I cannot see tomorrow, but I am in the hands of one who does. And there came a point where I had to admit that, and there is that place in everyone's life, and I don't know what crisis God will use to bring you to that place, but you must, you must go there. And if you're here this morning in crisis, then I offer you hope today.

You're here, and you're in crisis because God loves you, and he wants you to know you cannot fix this. You need him. You need Jesus.

You know what the other co-founder of this organization said as he spoke about his own story on the end of a journey that was a journey of such brokenness, a life destroyed by alcohol. Listen to what he said, and I'm not just pointing to alcoholics. I mean, I hope you're getting the point here.

I'm pointing to you Baptists who grew up and lived in the temperance movement all your life. You think you're better sometimes. You think your life's under better control.

You think you've got things together. You're deeply mistaken. No, you will not survive without Jesus.

You kids who think, oh man, I'll never get into that stuff. The world will eat you alive without Jesus. I'm talking to you people who've grown up good lives, good people, religious people, religious people.

Religion is one of the things that blinds us to the reality that life is not controllable. Respectability, that veneer that lies over our society is just that. Underneath is total chaos, and without Jesus, it destroys us.

See what this guy said. Then and there I humbly offered myself to God, a broken man in an asylum as I then understood him. You think this man understood who stood in front of Jesus, who he really was? No, he didn't.

But we'll see in a moment that he had to offer himself in trust. I know that many of you don't understand who Jesus is yet. You don't need to.

You need to offer yourself to him, however, because without him, you're going to die. Without him, you're going to be lost. I placed myself unreservedly under his care and direction.

I admitted for the first time that of myself, I was nothing, and without him, I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my newfound friend take them away root and branch. I have not had a drink since.

Not many of you know how to drink. I started a movement that is reaching the lives of literally thousands and thousands of people, and whether they realize it or not, every single one of them is on a journey to God, and many of them have found him to be the one behind the movement, behind the science, realizing and admitting, and I bless the Lord. This is why I'm drawn to people who are addicts, and I am, because like me, they realize they cannot live.

They cannot be good because they're not good. They cannot control their desires because there's no ability within them to do it. They cannot stifle their passions because it's not possible.

Hallelujah. Such humble people who know their mess-ups, and they come to God and say, you must do this. That's the gospel.

Hallelujah. That's the gospel, and all of us must come to that place. We have to, and God loves us enough that he'll bring us through any crisis to get us there.

Then he'll do something glorious, and he did it with this man. Where's my Bible? Because you know that there was one final thing that had to happen. He had to see that his life was out of control, and he had to come where that brought him, which was to the foot of Jesus Christ, but then you know what Jesus did? He did an incomprehensible thing.

He said, no, I won't go with you, and he was doing two things. He was shooting down those who were just looking at miracles. I'm not going to give you one, and all the people who were only there for the signs and wonders but he looked at the father, and he said to him, you may go.

Your son will not, and suddenly it was no longer about what Jesus could do. It was about whether this man could see who he was. I don't mean that he could see that he was God.

He didn't see that at this point. I don't mean that he could see that he believed in him as the savior of the world. I don't believe he saw that.

I believe he went away with great doubts in his mind. All that was necessary at this point was that he could see that this was a trustworthy character. He said, how could that happen? This is an incredible thing.

Jesus asked him to believe simply because Jesus said so, his son would get well. That's an incredible thing. This man had already exhibited the fact that he believed that if Jesus would come and touch his son, he would live.

This was an even further step, and Jesus took him out of the realm of what he could do to who he was. Am I trustworthy? Will you trust me insofar as this? He didn't give him all the theological treatises that we think people need. He just said, will you trust me enough to do this? Will you trust me enough to give me your life and to give me your son's life? Will you trust me enough to surrender this to me and go home? I promise you, your son will live.

Wow. How could he do it? He couldn't. Given the circumstances, given the man, given his lack of experience, given his lack of understanding who Jesus really is, he could never do such a thing.

But God did a miracle in the word of Christ. Faith comes by hearing. Hearing by the word of Christ as Jesus spoke to him.

Faith, the seed of faith was born in his soul. A miracle happened. Creation happened.

Jesus said, just trust me enough to surrender it now. And your son will live. Some of you have looked at Christianity and thought, I cannot do this.

I can't be what a Christian is. I can't live up to the standards. I've read parts of the Bible.

It seems so difficult. Listen, he doesn't ask you to do that. He asks you to trust him enough to give him your life now and to believe that he will rescue you.

And you say, I can't do that. Of course you can't. But he will speak life into your soul at this moment.

He will say, let there be faith enough just to do that. And you'll have it. And then I urge you to respond.

And it won't be faith to believe that he's all that you think I know he is. I don't know that much yet. So don't worry too much.

But it'll be faith enough just to say, okay, to let control go. That's what this was all about. So even here in his desperation, this little man thought that he could control the Lord Jesus and make him come to his son.

What Jesus said was, do you trust me enough to let go of control here and let me deal with this? That's the crux. That's what these alcoholics did. Trusted him just enough, just as much as they understood him, which for many and most is not much.

Enough to let go of the control of their lives to him. Does this make sense? See, this was such an important step. If the man had forced Jesus to come, if Jesus had come because he asked him to and brought him to the son and the son was healed and the man could have gone around the rest of his life saying to his son, son, because I made him come, he came and touched you.

I control the situation. I fixed it. I made him come.

And if you can think that you can sort out your life, and some of you have tried so long, man, you can be sober. Yeah, I did it. Some of you have tried for years.

Some people do. They're able to be sober for a year, two years, 20 years. And then suddenly everything spins out of control and they're in the hole that they were 20 years ago.

Nothing has changed because we can't do it. And finally, they get the point. Oh, it's not about me fixing it.

It's not about me making him heal me either. It's about me letting go and saying, yes, I trust you this much, just this much. I trust you to take care of this because I can't.

Look at what it says next. The man took Jesus at his word. Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful.

My friends, take Jesus at his word. You say, I can't. No, you can't.

But listen to the Holy Spirit. He speaks to your soul now and creates life. Take Jesus at his word.

Three minutes ago, you may not have been able to say, yeah, I can trust him. I'll give up my life. I'll let go of control.

But now the Holy Spirit is saying, you can trust him. Now your heart is saying, yeah, this is something I need to do. That is the creation of faith.

That is the encounter with the Holy Spirit. That is God at work. It's nothing to do with you.

Your response, abandon your life into his hands. Abandon your addictions. Abandon your confusions.

Abandon your emotional state. Abandon your circumstances. Let your life go and let God be God in your life.

Trust him enough to take that problem, which is the problem that brought you to him, the crisis that has broken your heart. Trust him enough. You don't have to understand all the ins and outs.

But if the Holy Spirit gives you that grace, and it is his work, if he's speaking to your heart today, then say, yes, Lord, here is my life. Here are my problems. Here is the one issue that is destroying me from within.

Here are my addictions. Here are my confusions. I'm going to leave them.

Take my life, Lord. I give it to you. And I promise you, in that context, given the power of the Holy Spirit as he brings you to that place, you will be free.

You will be free. But it won't be you. You won't be able to go around sticking your chest out and say, oh, yeah.

Sober now for ten years. I did it. Anybody whom I met, and I've been so privileged to meet some of these blessed people who understand this principle, know full well Jesus does it.

They're sober today because God has kept them sober. They'll be sober tomorrow only because God has kept them sober. It's no different for you and me.

You hypocrites who think that you do this, you need to repent. You think that your life is better than others. You need to say, oh, God, I cannot control it.

It's out of control. The secret sins underneath are now before you, and you need to let them loose. Say what you are, and let the Lord set you free.

I'd love to have been there for that moment, to watch a man turn away with certain uncertainty in his heart, but enough trust to say, Jesus. And I'm sure he kept his eye on Jesus as he walked away until he couldn't see him anymore, wondering, thinking, but having taken the step. He took the step.

He walked away. He left his child, his life in the hands of Jesus. The next day as he made his way home, the servants met him with the same words.

Your son lives. He said, when? When did he change? They told him one o'clock in the afternoon. A miraculous thing happened.

The disease seemed to leave. The fever was broken. He realized it was at one o'clock that Jesus said, leave it with me.

And he and his whole household worshiped Jesus Christ. There it is. There it is.

Will you? Admit to God that you cannot fix yourself. Will you today give this life, this brokenness? Will you offer it to him? Walk away, not understanding it all. Has the Holy Spirit spoken to your soul this morning and said, yes, this is true.

I need, you need to surrender to Jesus. Give him your life. You must survive without it.

Then respond to him. As we sing our last song, respond. Offer your life.

I promise you. I promise you. He promises you.

You see what Jesus said? Whoever would find his life will lose it. You can hold on to the desire to control. You can walk away and find your life, grip your life, keep your life, and you will lose it.

That's what Jesus said. But whoever would lose his life, for my sake, you can let it go to God today, and you will find for the first time in your life freedom today. Today.

Today. Because you put your confidence not so much in what he can do, but you let go to who he is. You put your confidence in him.

You give him control. So this man did. He gave Jesus control.

Will you do this today? Do this today. I urge you. Then tell us after our service this morning, before we go to bed, come and tell us this.

I've done this today. I've given up control of my life to Jesus Christ. I'm going to celebrate with you.

We're going to go to the pool now and celebrate with two friends who have done this. Hallelujah. You've done this.

They're going to share in the baptism an outward description, an outward symbol of this very reality. They gave up their lives to Jesus. That's what baptism symbolizes.

You come to the pool with us, will you? Let's have the baron come. I want to give you an opportunity to respond. If you need to pray with us about this, you can come forward and we will pray with you.

If you want to say, Lord, I want to surrender my control, you come forward and we will pray with you. You can pray and say, yes, Lord, I surrender control. You can say, Lord, it's all about you.

It's not about me. Let's stand and sing together this morning.

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