

BELIEVE: John 4:43-54

La Mirada Church

We're 12 sermons into the gospel of John a series we're calling, simply "Believe" – which is the reason John wrote his gospel – The entire Bible is written that we should believe – and John more than any other writer makes that point plain:

but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 20:31

While, the other 3 gospel writers all focused on Jesus's account in mostly a chronological order – following Jesus life step by step from birth to resurrection – John takes a different approach – following his life sign-by-sign and statement by statement.

In fact the verse right before this one give us John's approach...

Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book... but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 20:30-31

John walks us through Jesus's life sign by sign – 7 of them leading up to His resurrection – and statement by statement – 7 of them as well, all framed around revealing who is in 7 "I am..." statements so that we might do what? Believe. Exactly.

Of course, Jesus did more than 7 signs - John knows that... and of course Jesus made more than 7 statements about who He was ...but John's got a mission –

to get us to same place of belief as Thomas did when he felt Jesus' hands, feet, and side and said,
"My Lord and my God!"

John 20:28

Thomas believed because he had seen, but John wants us to be blessed as ones who have not seen and still believe.

Today we see Jesus a few days after an exciting and unexpected kingdom-building encounter –

Jesus had left Jerusalem heading north and deliberately took a road – not just any road – but the more direct road and one literally less traveled especially by devout Jews because it cut through the heart of Samaria a land and people despised by the Jews

he made His way to at a well – not just any well but a nearly 2000 year old well that Jacob had given to Joseph

he met a woman and not just any woman – a woman with a dubious history meeting her at a specific time John is careful to note – at high noon – the 6th hour

and he had a conversation – not just any conversation longest conversation between Jesus and another person recorded in the Gospels

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all so that he could point her to one truth – I’m the one you’re looking to worship and believe in.

And she along with the Samaritans in that town believed and said this incredible declaration:

“...we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world!”

John 4:42

no miracles, no signs, just belief.

Was it a miracle that got her attention? No. It was truth. She perceived he was a prophet

Right there Jesus had the well flowing with water – he could have turned it all to wine a repeat of his first sign – but, no miracles – just belief.

“Jesus told me all that I ever did...” and what did she do?

She believed. Then she ran and told the town the good news!

They were so excited they asked Jesus to stay and He did for two days – best two-day retreat ever at the feet of Jesus hearing him teach – just. time. with Jesus. and now...John 4:43

After the two days he departed for Galilee.

John 4:43

Why Galilee? So Glad you asked...John seems to anticipate the question too

...Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.

John 4:44

That’s a weird thing to do. An odd place to go if you already know that there’s going to be trouble.

Did Jesus just so happen to saunter through Samaria? No.

Any more than Jesus just so happened to meet up with Nicodemus that one night...

Or happened to be in the temple with a homemade whip in hand to clear it out...

Jesus has a pattern of intentionally going where he’s not likely to be understood and probably going to be rejected –

What had John said in the beginning?

He came to his own, and his own people did not – what? – receive him

John 1:11

The last people you’d think to be welcoming were the Samaritans and yet they were falling over themselves to receive Jesus and now, on that high note – Jesus is heading right back into an area He’s already said he won’t be welcomed and surprise surprise...

when he came to Galilee, what does John say they did? the Galileans welcomed him,

John 4:45

Why now? They hadn’t welcomed Him before. In fact, Luke wrote that when Jesus identified himself as the Messiah in the synagogue of his hometown of Nazareth,

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...all in the synagogue ... led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong.

Luke 4:28-29

That's not very welcoming...but something's different somehow and now these Galileans welcome him? This is still Jesus' home turf – pretty close to Nazareth still but something's different this time...

why are they so welcoming? Well, turns out, word always has a way of getting around...

*having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at **the feast...***

John 4:45

Ooooooh – they've been there and seen and now the miracle wine maker is back!

The Greek word translated feast is ἑορτή **hey-ar-tay** and it simply means feast – The NIV and NLT do some interpreting for you and add the word Passover – but in the Greek – it is simply “hey-ar-tay” the feast.

The Passover feast took place in Jerusalem and Jesus had an important reason to be there.

Jesus obeyed every commandment, kept every law, observed every single line of every letter of the Torah which required that 3 times a year men travelled to Jerusalem and often it wasn't just the men – entire families would head up to Zion to the Temple for this annual event.

The law that Jesus, the Word who became flesh, had given to Moses 1200 years before this moment said:
“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), at the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and at the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles).”

Deuteronomy 16:16

These feasts were put into place when after 400 years under Egyptian rule God raised up Moses and sent Him to demand that Pharaoh let His people go – you've seen the movie

[SLIDE] Let my people go!

or, better you've read the book and you know how it ends – spoiler alert - God does deliver the people. He rains terrible plagues to pry open Pharaoh's hardened heart and get the people of YHWH released.

The night before the final plague where God will kill the firstborn of all creation – men and animals – who do not live under the cover of the blood of a lamb – God explains what will happen and He gives His people a reminder forever of their new, true, identity...

do you know what the first thing He gave His people the night before that deliverance was?

A calendar!

Months, days, events, feasts all with one purpose – visibility – so that they would see Him as they looked back and remembered and see Him as they looked forward to anticipate. God's calendar, the events significant on

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His timeline all point to Jesus and all should be nothing but honored and protected and observed with delight and respect.

Let me tell you something – Satan is active and if you want to know what he’s hell bent on destroying pay attention to what he’s messing with – keep your eyes on Jesus? No, place something on a calendar to distract from Him? Absolutely! Do it in the name of compassion? Perfect! What kind of person would mind a calendar event that’s for seeing special people – the kind of people who have no idea about God’s timeline and priorities! Me – and hopefully you. Every inch of John’s account every chapter points to hours and days and feasts and occasion that bring Jesus into visibility – Satan is happy to distract us from that in the name of compassion. Watch out. Stick with God’s calendar – see Jesus.

So, God gives them a calendar and kicks it off with a new first month – Aviv – and a feast when they would forever remember the night of their deliverance with a called – Passover – 50 days after that they get Pentecost and three months after that – another feast – Tabernacles – it’s a Jesus Visibility calendar Fast-Forward 1200 years and to Jesus – the one who created this calendar and the observance laws and He is obediently back from that trip and they had seen what He’d done. John had said back in chapter two *...when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.*

John 2:23

Saw the say-mi-on in Greek – the signs always authenticated Jesus’ authority

and John is reminding us that these Galileans had been there and back like Jesus...

For they too had gone to the feast.

John 4:45

now he’s made it back to a familiar town...

MAP OF ISRAEL

(with verse overlaid)

So He came again (a second time) to Cana (it’s at the top past Nazareth – his hometown) in Galilee, where he had made the water wine.

John 4:46

John is sure to mention the wine miracle – not only was that the first sign it was probably on the people’s minds and why they are happy to welcome him –Maybe this man would do some more miracles? Make some more wine?

The issue is – Jesus is right when he said **prophets** are not welcome – but magic mystery men who turn water into wine? – that’s different...you see, prophets are truth tellers. Prophets pronounce judgment, command repentance, warn of punishment and hell...that’s not welcome. Save the hellfire – we want more water wine!

Among the regular folks in that area of Cana, about 20 miles from where Jesus had made the water wine there was good sized fishing village. The name of this town in Hebrew is Kfar Nahum which translates loosely to Lion’s Consolation.

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Jesus had stayed there for a few days with his family and disciples after that now famous wedding. It was from this village – Capernaum in Greek - that John introduces a not-so-regular man.

right now he is back to Cana. John wrote about this in chapter 2
This is where he had shown the

*So He came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an **official...***

John 4:46

your translation might read official, or royal officer, or nobleman – the Greek word is βασιλικός it means all those things – literally “little royal” and John’s readers would have understood this was a powerful man. The next time you have pesto or a delicious caprese salad with fresh basil think of this – it’s where we get the word for the plant- it means “royal”

He had the clothes, the clout, the connections and the authority of his position with Rome and even Herod himself – but he had something else – something that weighed heavier than the rich garments and the emblems of authority woven onto them – he had a heavy heart...why? because all the money, influence and power cannot insulate anyone from the realities of this fallen world and this wealthy, influential, man of power was not just a man, he was a father whose..

So He came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official ...whose son was ill. (ahsthenayo - literally without strength because his illness had kept him sick for so long)

John 4:46

Pause right there. We might have a natural inclination to resist the character in the story who is the rich guy. The 1% We might think when we read about a nobleman that he’s going to be the problem. John seems to set us up for that...I mean in writing this account he could have led with “there was a sick little boy” who lived in Capernaum... and that would’ve played on our pity. We’d be ready to feel for this man, instead what details does John lead with?

a man from Capernaum – the wealthy town, by the beautiful location, ruled by the Romans and there’s a man – not just a man, but a rich man, a nobleman, a Roman ruler a basil-ikos – little royal who probably worked for and with Herod himself - booooo – we hate these guys! Right?

His son is sick? Boo-Hoo. He can afford to pay out of pocket for the best treatments! Let’s get back to Yeshua the miracle doer and wine maker!

A few verses back we were cheering for the lady with a dubious background, the marginalized woman who is just out at noon getting water and she meets and is transformed by her encounter with Jesus – hooray! We like that. We relate. She’s us.

This guy? Up until John mentions his child we are getting ready to expect trouble or at least indifference. We’re programed almost to boo the rich and root for the poor. But Not Jesus and John knows this too his account continues...

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*When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he **went** to him (the Greek wording has the sense that he dropped everything at once and went the 20 miles uphill from Capernaum) and **asked** (Greek: is stronger begged, implored, pleaded, and kept begging KJV – besought ἐρωτάω hey-rotah – to ask for special consideration- it literally means to ask on special footing”) him to **come down** and **heal** his son, for he was at the point of death.*

John 4:47

You can feel his anguish. Every parent has experienced this helpless feeling, the brokenness of seeing their child sick, the fear watching a fever spike...and this man, instead of clinging to his child's side – leaves his home, leaves his wife and family and the rest of those tending to his wealthy household and on hearing that Jesus had come he dropped everything.

Hope hanging with every step on that road up from Capernaum – the lion's consolation to Cana. He finally arrives and makes his way to Yeshua

So, you can imagine the scene, a breathless man, maybe composing himself from the anxious hike. It's early Spring in the region, the air is crisp probably like today...A Basilikos in Galilee would have been used to only one response to his requests – yes sir.

But today he's not just one of Herod's little royals he's a father in anguish for his child, reaching across cultural and political barriers to a man he's only heard about, but it's worth it to save his child's life...He's humbled himself and is begging for the miracle wine maker to come down with him and heal his dying son. Change my life, change my son's life, come down I'm begging you.

I imagine he expected his pleading request would be met with the response that a man of his stature was used to

that this famous Jesus would do like the Basilikos had done - drop everything and go

What do famous people want? More fame! How do they get it? More signs and wonders. So, with the heat of his request hanging in the air – a father's desperate eyes on the famous one

Jesus responds...verse 48

...Jesus said to him, “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.”

John 4:48

Oh Jesus...what a blow. His words must have landed hard and harsh and it almost doesn't sound like Jesus, It comes off cold even judgmental...why did Jesus respond like this?

Actually, Jesus had a lot of responses that feel harsh to us at first...

When his mother said, “They're out of wine.” Jesus said, “What does that have to do with me? It's not my hour yet.”

Nicodemus brought his questions in the secret of night and Jesus tells him he has to be “born again. and the Spirit is like the wind. It goes where it wills.”

He tells the Samaritan woman that he's thirsty and when she offers him water, he said, “I have water you don't know about...living water. You should ask me for that.”

With Jesus you might not get what you're asking for but you'll always get what you need.

This man isn't here to ask Jesus about belief – he's desperate because his son is at the point of death.

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So Jesus' response seems harsh and rebuking but wait...

What language is the new testament written in originally?

Greek...

and in the Greek Jesus isn't addressing the just the man. All the attention must have been on this wealthy official presenting his request to Jesus but Jesus' answer isn't to the man alone, in the Greek you see the y'all – or plural you...

...Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see [ἴδητε] signs and wonders you people will not believe [πιστεύσητε].”

John 4:48

He's speaking to him, but also to everyone in his hometown of Galilee. Why?

they welcomed Jesus for what he could do, not for who he was – The woman at the well recognized this – no miracle needed.

And yet...How does God bring any of us to Him? Nicodemus was drawn by intellectual curiosity in the middle of the night. The Samaritan woman isn't even looking at all, she thinks at best she's close enough.

This man is coming out of desperation.

God can and does use any situation to bring us to Him.

This man came. That's where faith began. he didn't understand exactly what he'd find, but he came.

To him it's his son who is at the point of death – but what he doesn't realize yet is that he is as well.

The Basilikos this panicked father is also at the point of death as is anyone who does not believe

And Jesus want to bring him to the place where he will believe...

So Jesus bluntly says to the man and the others Galileans there: “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.”

To the Royal Official's credit, he refuses to be put off. He repeats his request and respect, for he addresses Jesus as a lord with all authority – the same way the Woman at the Well had addressed Jesus -

“Sir, [Κύριε] come down before my child dies.”

John 4:49

Come down – the pleading again – before my child dies.

I heard you about wanting a sign and a wonder...but come anyway. Do it anyway. My son is about to die.

He has a certain kind of faith, a belief that Jesus is some type of a miracle worker; that he has powers that ordinary people do not have;

If only Jesus would come down, and in a last, desperate measure, do something for my boy

There's no room in this man's theology to consider that Jesus has the power of life after death. He's got to get Jesus there before death.

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this time Jesus gives no rebuke and John offers no commentary – instead a simple shocking statement:
Ok, I'll come down? No. just...

“Go; your son will live.” ζῆ

John 4:50

literally in the Greek – your son lives – “sou zay”

No sooner had the man arrived and in an exchange of a dozen words and a million emotions Jesus has spoken life. 20 miles away his little boy lives.

I don't need to come down. I have heard your request and I have given my answer – your son lives. Go.

Could Jesus have gone? Yes, of course. But Jesus is using this moment to teach this father to not just believe what Jesus could do, but to believe on who he was. Life Giver.

Not just prophet. Not just miracle worker. Not just “sir” but Kyrie - Lord of Life itself
What's next? The same thing that is next for any of us and all of us...belief.

“Go; your son will live.”

*The man **believed** (instant faith in the Greek) the word [λόγῳ] that Jesus spoke to him and **went** on his way.*

John 4:50

On behalf of his little son the man had enough faith

to make the trip up to Cana based only on what he had heard – not personally seen

to hang in there past Jesus' rebuke

to humble himself as a Basilikos

to hope in the power of Jesus - a power he didn't understand

and finally to cease striving

to head back on the strength of Jesus' word.

He stopped begging. He believed. He went.

Faith is not what you feel...faith is what you do. He went in belief because of what he had heard.

That one act of faith will bring great rewards and some incredible moments!

As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering.

John 4:51-53

Wow! What a relief!

So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour (about 1pm - midday) the fever left him.”

John 4:51-53

What did the father know that his servants couldn't have known. While they were home the boy began to revive and...

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The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live."

John 4:51-53

Incredible. The love of Jesus touched every detail. Hey, your son will live and he'll revive at the exact moment these words of life leave my lips.

On February 20th my husband Glen was away on a work trip to Salt Lake City. He was driving the first leg to Cedar City. I happened to get a screenshot that night when I was looking to where he was on our shared location map.

map slide

That night around 8pm - the 14th hour on Jewish time - I felt a strong urge to pray for him – for his safety in particular. Honestly, sometimes I get worried while he's away and just shake it off and relax. But this was different. I really felt pressed to pray – no sense of worry – just pray. I did and also messaged my sisters and a couple of friends to pray for Glen too. I went to bed and rested in faith not worrying.

TEXT SLIDE

Glen and I have coffee together every morning – even if he's on the road we try to video chat our coffee time. so, that morning's coffee time here's a screenshot from that morning's coffee time...

coffee time slide

he was telling me about the drive and the beautiful views and about an especially vibrant rainbow that remained visible for over an hour as he was driving until the sun had set. After the sun set he shared that he had a close call on the highway.

A truck to his right merged suddenly crossing into his lane just inches off his front bumper and slid crossing the wet lanes. Glen had to resist the urge to slam on his brakes because of the wet road conditions and just apply firm pressure and hold steady to avoid a collision with cars coming up from behind while avoiding this wild truck sliding in front of him.

I held my coffee with wide eyes as he told me about it.

What do you think I asked Glen after he finished telling me about this harrowing moment?

what time do you think it happened?

Yes. and Yes.

God answered my prayer – all our prayers that night.

text to sisters slide

You probably can't really read it but here's the screenshot of my message to my sisters that morning after our coffee time...the last part reads:

"...it happened about 10 minutes after I messaged you guys for prayer – I don't always get strong promptings for prayer like that but the urge was undeniable and unignorable and so thank you again for being faithful to pray."

I told Glen about our prayers and the timing and we both had a moment. Wow.

Glen's brakes and nerves held when they needed to

Prayers answered in God's perfect timing.

The father of that dying boy came to Jesus in faith – little faith, inexperienced untested – but faith enough – and Jesus, answered.

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Have you ever come to Jesus with a request, maybe desperate like this man?
You brought a need to him and you had in mind the way it would be answered?
Out of the longing in our heart we can't think any other way for Jesus to respond than the way we have in mind so we say, In effect like the Basilikos, "Jesus you need to come down."
We cannot imagine the answer in any other way.
We have faith, little faith, tiny, inexperienced and untested faith...
But the anxious father heard Jesus, took him at his word and holding onto His Word, the promise of life he went down...and what happened?

And he himself believed, and all his household.

John 4:53

He believed. His servants believed, his wife any other children...the entire household. How? through the testimony the father gave – he encountered Jesus – didn't grasp who He really was not yet – but he believed and the entire family did too.
And don't you think that for the rest of that child's life as he grew up he could tell and retell the story of the time when his dad ran off to meet the Jesus and Jesus didn't come but instead just healed him from a distance at exactly 1pm on that beautiful spring day?
And his mom told the story and the servants and of course the Basilikos himself – that kind of encounter changes everything
When Glen and I had our coffee time and we realized that God had his hand of protection on Glen and the car at exactly the time I had that unignorable urge to pray – you know I told that story – you know that it increased our faith

When the Samaritan woman ran back to her village they believed on the testimony of her word and then for themselves. and here, with this believing Basilikos he brings the gospel and his entire household believes

Why tell us this account?

Is it so we'll have enough faith that we too can get our loved ones healed? Can God do that? Sure. Is that the point? No. It isn't a wikihow article laying out steps for us to get what we want out of God. This was a sign authenticating who Jesus was.

This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

John 4:54

This first sign – water into wine
Why the signs?

...so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 20:31

Signs point the way – John wrote about the signs of Jesus. Moses also did signs.
Remember what happened back in Epypt?
God said to Pharaoh: "Let my people go!" and Pharaoh refused.

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What did God say? Ok, then

I will multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt.

Exodus 7:3

Moses' first sign was turning the Nile waters into blood – everything in it died and everyone was filled with dread.

What was Jesus first sign? He turned water into wine! and everyone lived and everyone was filled with joy!

The sign of Moses...

The young son of the Pharaoh, healthy

alive, dies at midnight because of his father's hard unbelieving heart.

This sign of Jesus...

The young son of the Basilikos, sick and dying, lives! Lives! He lives at midday because his father's humbled believing heart!

Jesus is moving us to see and focus on Him alone – not because we get what we want but satisfied in getting Him and the power of His word.

And sign after sign in the old and then in the new everything points to the way of death and the way of life.

Here's a final question for you – and it points to a sign that we are about to observe - What was the first thing that God gave His people when He delivered them from slavery in Egypt?

A CALENDAR.

And the very first date God put on that calendar pointed to the ultimate sign – that by being covered the blood of the lamb – all who believed would be saved from death.

The night of their exodus – their great deliverance the lamb's blood would provide a sign to the angel of death that the people under this sign were covered and the angel of the LORD would Passover them. They were commanded to make bread and eat it without leavening, and take blood and put it on their doorposts – both signs of deliverance – and the beginning of a not just a calendar but a covenant between God and His people. 1200 years after that night Jesus took the signs – the bread and the blood and on the night

he was betrayed, he took bread,

and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

In a moment we're going to do follow Jesus's example and take the cup, the bread and remember – Jesus didn't go to the dying child – your son lives, your son lives, your son lives – three times the Official heard these words of life and he believed – Jesus didn't go down with him - instead he healed the child right where he stood him with the power of His word – that's the sign for us today as well – Jesus heals with his word and we live, we live live. receive and believe that today and thank Him as you take the cup and the bread remembering His saving grace for you.

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After communion we have the exciting joy to witness baptism – another sign that points to our deliverance. Like the Israelites freed from sin walked through the Red Sea and came out a new people – stay after communion for the baptisms and celebrate with us.

Let's pray