

Sermon Series: *The Gospel of John*

Your Son Will Live

National Sanctity of Life Sunday

John 4:46-54 (ESV)

46 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. **47** When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. **48** So Jesus said to him, “*Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.*” **49** The official said to him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” **50** Jesus said to him, “*Go; your son will live.*” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. **51** As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. **52** So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.” **53** The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, “*Your son will live.*” And he himself believed, and all his household. **54** This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

We’ve following Jesus through the early days of His ministry. Last week we followed him into the town of Samaria, a town in which pious Jews would never go. Yet He obeyed His heavenly Father and He willingly chose to go where others dared not to go. The result was that many in the town of Sychar became convinced that Jesus was messiah. They concluded “we have heard heard [Him] ourselves and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world” (Jn 4:42).



Jesus spent two days with the Samaritans in Sychar and then He departed and made the 40 mile trip north back to Cana.

John reminds us (v.46) that Cana was the location of the first sign that Jesus did. At the wedding He had turned water into wine, symbolizing that the salvation that He was bringing was much more joyously wonderful and abundant than the old ways of ritual purification.

When Jesus arrived at Cana, word got around. The word reached 15 miles away to Capernaum. There, an official, heard that Jesus had returned to Galilee. The Greek word translated ‘official’ (*basilikos*) refers to someone in the service of a king. Though he was not a king, this most likely refers to Herod

Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee.

This official had a son who was very ill and near death. When the man heard that Jesus was in Cana, he left Capernaum and made the 15 mile journey to Cana. He searched through the town and found Jesus and went to him.

Pleading For His Son's Life

The man **asked** Jesus repeatedly and pleadingly (NIV 'begged,' NASB 'implored') to return with him to Capernaum so that Jesus might heal his son, for he was at the point of death (v.47). "The imperfect tense of the verb "begged" (*ērōta*, from *erōtaō*, to "ask" or "request") implies repeated or persistent action. The request was not casual but insistent."¹ The sickness with which his son was taken, was about to take his life. This man had one thing on his mind and that was saving his son's life. However, Jesus had much more on His mind.

John 4:48 (ESV)

48 *"Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."*

Jesus' answer is a bit shocking. The man was not asking for a sign like the Jews had (2:18) when Jesus cleaned out the temple. This man is simply asking for Jesus to come heal his son before he died. And yet Jesus says, *"Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."*

Beyond "Belief"

Will not believe what? That Jesus can perform miracles? No, that is not it because this man *does* believe that Jesus can do miracles for that is the very reason he has come to Jesus. So Jesus is driving at a kind of "belief" that is beyond simply believing that He was able to perform miracles.

Notice also that Jesus says, "... *you will not believe*," which indicates that this unbelief is volitional. The people Jesus has in mind are the people who **choose** not to believe **unless** they see signs and wonders. Jesus is not pleased with this kind of belief. It is a *kind* of belief, but it is not the kind of belief Jesus was seeking. It is a step in the right direction, but it must go farther. There is a deeper "belief" that Jesus was seeking. It is a kind of belief that goes **beyond** signs and wonders. Remember what Jesus said,

Matthew 16:4 (ESV) (cf. Mt 12:39)

4 *"An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah."*

Jesus is never impressed with sign seekers when they are more enamored with the signs than with the Savior who stands behind the signs. So Jesus is not impressed that this man believes that He can do miracles (because the man *does* believe Jesus can do miracles). There is something more important about Jesus that this man is currently NOT believing. There is a deeper "belief" that Jesus is pursuing in this man. Jesus wants him to believe more about Him than that He performs miracles.

OPTIONAL

John actually gave us a hint at this in the two verses (v.43-45) that bridge between the Samaria scene and the scene in Cana. In verse 44 Jesus says, *"A prophet has no honor in his own hometown."* But quite unexpectedly, John immediately goes on in the next verse and apparently contradicts what he just reported Jesus had said. Verse 45,

John 4:45 (ESV)

45 *"So when he [i.e. Jesus] came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast."*

¹ Frank E. Gaebelin, Merrill C. Tenney and Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 9: John and Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 60.

Now this verse may appear to be a contradiction, but it is not. The reason they welcomed Jesus was because they had seen all that he had done at the feast. Meaning that they saw others signs and wonders and miracles that Jesus did while He was in Jerusalem at Passover (like cleaning out the temple, etc.). John does not give us the details of exactly what He did, but he does tell us that Jesus did other “signs” (John 2:23). So the Galileans welcomed Jesus because of the miracles and signs they saw, but Jesus is not content what that kind of welcome.

In verse 48 Jesus is clearly speaking to this official, but He is also speaking to everyone else standing around, because the ‘you’ in this verse is plural. Perhaps He even has in mind all the Galileans. The Galileans had welcomed Jesus because of the signs He was doing, but they were failing to see beyond the signs to the greater truth to which the signs pointed—the truth of who Jesus is.

The signs pointed to the fact that Jesus was messiah! Jesus was God’s only Son. He was so much more than a miracle worker. Working miracles only pointed to the fact that He was God in human flesh. This is the truth that the people were refusing to believe. They believed that Jesus could do miracles, but they failed to grasp the greater truth that the miracles were pointers to Jesus’ divine identity and not merely divine ability. This is the truth to which Jesus is directing this official.

The official is in no mood to argue with Jesus. He is not put off by Jesus’ challenging response. He simply implores Jesus to come.

John 4:49 (ESV)

49 “*Sir, come down before my child dies.*”

The man is pleading with Jesus. At this moment this man does not care who Jesus is. All he is concerned about was saving the life of his son. He had heard that Jesus could heal people and if that was true then maybe He could heal his son. It did not matter who Jesus was. He simply wanted his son to live. He uses the term “child” here in stead of “son” indicating the deep affection he had for his son.

This man loved his young son and he was doing for him all that he could. He believes that Jesus must go with him and be present to the child in order to do him any good. He states, “**come down**” (i.e. to my son where he lays) since Capernaum lay on the coast of the Sea of Galilee which was 700 feet below sea level.²

Jesus again offers an unexpected response.

John 4:50 (ESV)

50 “*Go; your son will live.*”

Jesus Was Not “Coming Down” With Him

The man now has a decision to make. Jesus clearly will not be going with him to see his son. The man had been, up to this point, repeatedly asking Jesus to come and go down to his house and stand

² D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 239.

beside the boy and touch him and heal him. However, Jesus now makes it clear that He is not going to the man's house. In fact, Jesus gives a command to the man along with a promise. *"Go. Your son will live."*

How will the man respond? Would he get angry that Jesus was not going home with him? Will he accept Jesus' word? Will he believe what Jesus said? Or not?

John 4:50 (ESV)

50 The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.

The man **"believed..."** What did he believe? He believed the word that Jesus spoke. What word did Jesus speak? He said the boy would live. So the man believed that his son would live even though Jesus was not going down to his house with him. He believed that His son would now survive, even though he had seen no evidence to confirm it. He believed his son would live because he trusted in Jesus' word.

The man found lodging that night and then began the journey home the next morning. On the way home, the man met his servants.

John 4:51-52 (ESV)

51 As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. 52 So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." 53 The Father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. 54 This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

When the servants saw that the son was improving and would live, they departed from the house to bring the good news to their master. When the official heard the news, he asked the time of his improvement. The seventh hour is 13:00 (1:00 p.m.). The man knew that was the exact time when Jesus had given the word, *"Your son will live."* His son's recovery was no accident. This was not a case of coincidence. God was at work.

John says, *"And he himself believed, and all his household"* (4:53).

Believed what? Believed that Jesus could do miracles? No, it's much more than that. They already believed Jesus could do miracles. They had witnessed His power to do miracles. They knew he could work miracles and heal the sick (even those who were about to die) and even from a great distance. Jesus was 15 miles away when he spoke that word. They knew Jesus could heal because the son was recovering.

So what did this man believe now that he did not believe before? He believed that Jesus was more than just a healer. He believed that **Jesus is the giver of life**. When you meet a man who says, "Your son will live," and you know your son is dying and then your son suddenly, at the very moment this man said what he did, your son begins to recover, what do you think about this man?

What should you think about a man who speaks a word about your dying son and at the moment He speaks, your son stops dying and starts living? What do you conclude about such a man—a man whose word gives life to your son?

Jesus: Not Just A Great Healer, But the Giver of Life

I think you must conclude, “This is not a mere man. This is not just a great healer. No mere man can say, “Your son will live,” and he indeed lives. A mere man cannot say that. You believe that *this* man is unlike any other man on the planet. You believe that *this* man is truly a man of God if there ever was one. You believe this man is the giver of life. **Jesus is the giver of life.**

But wait a minute. Does not life come from God? Yes. And here John is simply again showing us the reason why he wrote the way he did in the Prologue (Jn 1:1-18). Remember the opening verses of this letter when John wrote those amazing words about Jesus?

John 1:1-4 (ESV)

1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

John 1:14 (ESV)

14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John 1:18 (ESV)

18 *No one has ever seen God; the only God [i.e. the Word, i.e. Jesus], who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.*

All things were made through him (i.e. Jesus) and without him was not anything made that was made!

In Him was life!

There is NO ONE like Jesus. He is God. He is God who became human flesh. Yes, life comes from God and yes, Jesus is God. So Jesus is the life-giver.

John 5:26 (ESV)

26 *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.*

All life comes from God. God creates life through Jesus. “In him was life” (Jn 1:4). “All things were made through him, that is through Jesus, and without him, that is without Jesus, was not anything made that was made.” All life comes through Jesus. No life lives without Jesus causing it to live. No human life happens without Jesus bringing it about.

Colossians 1:16-17 (ESV)

16 *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

The very life of this official’s son hinged upon the word of Jesus. The reason that this sick son lived and did not die was because Jesus said, “**Your son will live.**” This son lived because Jesus said he would.

Every human life comes from God. When God creates human life, He does so through the activity of Jesus. All things, including human life, is created through Him and for Him. And He is the One who sustains life. No human life is granted apart from the activity and word of Jesus.

Precious, Joyful Words to Parents

“*Your son will live,*” were precious words in this official’s ears. These words brought great joy this man and his wife! These words brought him salvation and brought salvation to his whole household.

But these are words that some parents will not hear, like the parents of Yue Yue Wang.

Last October the 20th, I was following the news of Qaddafi’s capture when suddenly I saw a news clip of a two-year-old Chinese girl wandering through a market street.

While looking behind her, she waddled forward directly into the path of an oncoming van. She never saw the van coming. The van struck the child and the right front wheel rolled over the toddler. Fortunately the driver stopped before the rear wheels could do further damage.

I involuntarily winced at the sight. The sight nearly made me sick. I stared in disbelief. I sat utterly stunned trying to figure out if what I was seeing was truly real. My eyes welled with tears as I realized this security surveillance footage was indeed real. I could not imagine this child’s pain.

Then the horror got worse. The driver, after pausing for a moment, suddenly continued forward, rolling over the torso and legs of the child with the rear wheels. He then drove away leaving the scene. He did not help the wounded child. He simply left her. I nearly lost my breath. I could not imagine the sheer cold-hearted recklessness that I had just witnessed.

The video kept playing. There was no sound. Quiet seconds dragged on.

Then someone appeared in the top left hand corner of the screen. It was a man. He will help the child, I thought. However, he walked right by the helpless child, nearly stepping on her feet, apparently without even noticing the battered and bleeding baby lying in the street. He did not stop. He did not help. He did not even look at the child.

Then another truck pulled around the corner. The driver slowly turned the corner but did not stop. It was unimaginably obvious what was about to happen—for a second time. The driver did not swerve to miss the child. The truck drove straight over the little girl. It was as if there was nothing in the street worth swerving for. One wants to believe that the driver did not see her. Nevertheless, the truck did not stop. And no one helped.

Then a motorcyclist appeared from the lower right hand corner. He, saw the toddler, turned and circled to miss the child. He looked down at the baby, staring for a moment, drove around her, looked away, and kept going. He never stopped. He did not help.

Then came several pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, and rickshaw drivers. All looked at the little child. All kept walking or riding or cycling. No one stopped. No one helped this defenseless, dying baby lying alone in the cold street. They all passed by.

A total of 18³ people passed this child in an agonizing seven minutes without offering any assistance. They just walked by, looked down at the dying child, and then kept walking, as if nothing noteworthy had happened.

Finally, 57⁴ year-old Chen Xianmei, a trash collector⁵ picked up the little girl and pulled her from the street and began looking for her parents. Her parents live in and operate a nearby shop.

I was physically affected by what I had witnessed.

My first thought was, “If I feel this much anguish and I am so affected by seeing this and I have no attachment to this child, then how much does such a horrible event affect a holy and loving God who cherishes justice?” He created this little girl. He formed her with His own hands. He must ache to an infinite degree. This was so wrong in a hundred different ways. And yet this kind of thing happens multiple times every day all over this globe. There are about 150,000 deaths every day worldwide. That’s almost 2 people per second. And God created every single one.

My second thought was, “How is it possible that so many people could walk by this little broken baby and yet do and say nothing? I would never do that. Would I? This would never happen in America. Would it?”

Then it struck me. This in fact does happen every single day. And I say and do nothing.

This happens every day, not just in China, but in the U.S. I know that in the U.S. over 3,700⁶ babies are similarly tossed aside and discarded and left broken and bleeding. The location is not a market street. The location is the womb. The location is not in Foshan city. The location is abortion clinics in cities all across this land.

About 115,000 babies are aborted every day world wide.⁷ From the dawn of humanity, the womb has been the safest place on the planet. Today, it is one of the most deadly. The number of abortions has more than twenty times surpassed the total number of deaths from all of our national wars combined.

Will we continue to pass by? Will we continue to say nothing?

Proverbs 24:11-12 (ESV)

*11 Rescue those who are being taken away to death;
hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.*

*12 If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,”
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?
Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it,
and will he not repay man according to his work?*

³ Source <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-15398332> accessed 21 Oct 2011.

⁴ Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/19/world/asia/toddlers-accident-sets-off-soul-searching-in-china.html> accessed 21 Oct 2011.

⁵ Source http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/yue-yue-chinese-toddler-run-over-in-hit-and-run-believed-to-be-stable/2011/10/18/gIQA83kuL_blog.html accessed 21 Oct 2011.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Source: <http://www.abortionno.org/Resources/fastfacts.html> accessed 21 Oct 2011.

There are thousands of little human lives being taken away to death in this country every single day. One day we will stand in judgment before the living God. And if we say, “I didn’t know.” He will not accept that answer, because He knows our hearts.

How should we respond? What should we do?

I’m not sure all that we should do. But one thing I know, “nothing” is not one of the options. After I saw this video I called Daybreak and made an appoint to visit and learn what they were doing and to see them and get to know them. That’s one thing you can do. Meet the people at Daybreak.

Second, you can pick up a baby bottle and fill it up with money.

Third, you can do is pray. Commit to praying that legalized abortion will be overturned in this country. Pray this every day.

Fourth, you can pray that God will turn the hearts of mothers and fathers back toward their children. You can pray that children will be seen to be the blessing that they truly are rather than a curse on individual autonomy and career advancement or a burden that shackles personal development.



Another thing you can do read a free ebook by John Piper. This free ebook is available [here](#). The book is called *Exposing the Dark Work of Abortion*. It is available as a free PDF file at www.desiringgod.org.



Lastly, you can get informed. Visit www.abort73.com and read and watch and learn. Then act.

If you are a mother who has had an abortion or a father who has demanded one or a parent who insisted on one or a doctor who performed one, remember that the Giver of Life is also the Forgiver of Sin—all sin—if only you will ask.

If you would like someone to pray with you, members of the prayer team are waiting for you at the prayer room.

I have asked a wife, a mother, a grandmother, and a nurse to come and close us in prayer.