

Just before launching, wanted to ask you to pray for us. We are putting our house on the market this week. If things go well...on Wednesday.

We are really excited about what the future holds, but very sad about the prospect of leaving the friendships we have here. We receive so much good from you all.

I want to thank you for how generous you have been in your encouragements over the last couple of months.

And I want to thank you for the sacrifice you are making in this. Kristy and I pray that whoever comes behind us is 10x more gifted, and 10x more fruitful, but there is sacrifice in the transition, even. And so, I want to thank you for the sacrifice you are making.

But also remind you that this process is worth it. The nations simply will not be reached with the gospel apart from our individual and corporate sacrifice.

But to be some small part of God's work in gathering a worldwide people for himself.....that is worth any sacrifice we could make.

So in some ways this is a joint venture we feel like we are on with you, and we feel so privileged to be caught up in God's work with you.

Pray.

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One of the reasons that I love this series in the gospel of John so much is that our goal is so **simple**, and at the same time so **profound**: see Christ in the text and believe in him.

John **sets this goal out for us in 20:31**, "these are written [the things in the text] 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."

So we look to the text so that we can **admire Jesus Christ**, and so that **our faith in him can be strengthened**. I love that goal. And I trust that you've experienced that thus far.

Now, one of the things that is **most compelling to me** about Jesus is that he says and does things that are **counterintuitive**. He is a surprising Savior. So for example:

-he **does not choose mighty men**, or influential men as his followers. He chooses fisherman and despised tax collectors.

-he does not **announce or reveal his glory first in the great centers** of trade or religion. He shows his glory at a **country wedding** in Cana; at an out of the way **well in Sychar** of Samaria.

-he **strides into the temple**, and acts as if he owns the place, driving out the money changers, and claiming that the Temple belongs to HIS Father. The **carpenters son** **assumes the authority of the Son of God**.

-He does not play politics with the most respected leaders of his day, but instead tells Nicodemus that he is so far from the kingdom of God that a radical rebirth has to take place before he can come in.

-he does not simply dispense wise teachings like other religious leaders, but openly claims that people's eternal destiny rests, basically entirely, on what they do with him

-he does not participate in ethnic and religious bigotry that was written into the ethos of his culture, but instead shares eating utensils with a despised and rejected Samaritan woman, and offers the kingdom of God to her.

He is the counterintuitive Savior of the World.

Title: Jesus, the Counterintuitive Savior of the World

And today in our text we have more of that....

In our text today, we see the mission of Jesus unfold in ways that we simply would not expect....and yet in ways that stir us; draw us to him; and ultimately that create love and faith in our hearts. Let's read, and then I have 3 things I'd like you to see.

Read John 4:39-54

### 1. Willingly Suffers Dishonor

You may remember that at the beginning of chapter 4 Jesus leaves Judea (in the south) in order to head to Galilee (in the north). He takes a 2 day break in Samaria, he engages the woman at the well, her life is transformed; she tells the rest of the town about Jesus; they come in droves to him; ask him to stay for 2 days, and by the end of his time there, the entire town of Sychar has believed on Jesus as the Savior of world.

This makes what he does next, well, counterintuitive.

After 2 days in Samaria he leaves for Galilee. Now, why according to verse 44 does he do that? Notice the "for" at the beginning of verse 44.

Now it may help you to know that Galilee is to Nazareth what NOVA is to Gainesville. Galilee is the region; Nazareth is the town. And of course Nazareth is the town where Jesus grew up.

So Jesus leaves the success of Samaria for the dishonor of his hometown; his home area.

So, why does Jesus leave a place where he is experiencing incredible success and popularity and fruitfulness (Samaria) for a place where he will have no honor?

And be sure to notice that **its because he will receive “no honor” in Galilee, that Jesus goes there.** He leaves the popularity, for the scorn on purpose. That is counterintuitive.

We **did know that this was coming.** John has already told us so in **1:11**, “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.”

And then just around the corner in **chapter 5, verse 18**, we have this: “This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”

And **eventually, in John 12**, around verse 36, John will show us that the Jewish rejection of Jesus is in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies.

So, **why did Jesus leave the popularity and success of Samaria in** order to go to a place where he would have no honor, among people who would eventually orchestrate his crucifixion?

Because that is what he came to do. He came to be crucified. The Jews dishonored Jesus because they respected him as a miracle-worker, but rejected him as the Messiah; as the Son of God. His insistence on that identity would led to rejection, and eventually crucifixion. He moved toward the dishonor, because in so doing, he would fulfill the mission he was on.

Here’s how **DA Carson** says it, “He may have been popular in Samaria, but he presses on to his own hometown, where public sentiment will finally take him to Calvary. That is his mission: to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

Jesus was **resolute about the trajectory of his life.** He **knew what his Father** had for him. And he had set his **face like a flint** to be about his Father’s business.

It was **not wrong for him to gain popularity** and honor in Samaria. But to remain there would have been to **compromise the greater mission.**

Now just for a moment I want you to revel in this good news. Jesus was so controlled by his mission in life that he left the applause of Samaria for the rejection of his own people. Popularity is not inherently evil. But in the case of Jesus, staying in Samaritan would have derailed his mission to proclaim himself as Messiah among the Jews, be rejected, crucified, and in so doing, become the Savior of the world.

He was a man on a mission. A counterintuitive, bloody mission of rescue. That mission, that one all-encompassing goal, informed and shaped the trajectory of his life.

Now let me ask you: what is the **controlling purpose in your life?** What is the **one thing, underneath of everything**, that drives and moves the trajectory of your life? What are you **spending your life for?** What are you after?

And then the follow-on question: is that **really what you want** to be about?

We are **controlled by something** in us that moves us in certain directions; after certain goals; aiming after certain hopes.

Usually its comfort and security, the two great idols of American culture. But I think for Christians there is something better. Something that informs everything else.

**No one had a more single-minded vision** for what his life was about than the Apostle Paul:

And he talked about it in many different ways.

**Acts 20:24**, “[24] But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

You see what controlled him: **finish the race, proclaim the gospel** of God’s grace.

Or he could say it like this:

**Philippians 3:7-8**, “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [8] Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.”

That was the **one thing underneath everything** for Paul: **know Christ, gain Christ.**

I don’t think everybody needs the **same mission in life**. Obviously, **Jesus’ specific mission** was unique to him. Even **Paul’s was unique**—he was the apostle to the Gentiles. But whatever our mission is it should be **the unique way that we are aiming to glorify God and make much of Christ**. We should all be able to say, with Paul, my aim is to know Christ; to gain Christ. I’m doing it by \_\_\_\_\_.

You might do it as an **IT guy raising a family**; or as a **single woman fully devoted** to the Savior. But at the **end of the day, underneath of everything else**, what is the one thing that drives you; that pushes the trajectory of your life in the direction its on?

Listen to Jesus words from **Matthew 16**:

“[24] Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [25] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Notice that **little word, “anyone”**. You see its **not just preachers, and missionaries** that need a consuming, underneath of everything else, purpose for living. Its **anyone who would follow Christ**.

And I just want to ask you—what’s your one thing? What’s the thing that is driving you?

**\*ill.\*** at a friend’s house yesterday....you’ve got to talk to my son: **two massive empty GNC bottles**; wants to work at sport and health; grades are slipping (all he does is work out).

Reading **Jim Elliott's biography**. The controlling passion of his life was to take the gospel to unreached places. And so **everything in his life funneled toward** that: for example joined the wrestling team in college in order to gain mastery of his body; to grow in personal discipline.

I knew a man that owned a **carpet company in TN**; he set a salary for himself and gave everything else away to missions. He had figured out his mission—do a great carpet business; fund the gospel getting to the nations.

But it does not have to be missions, and it does not have to be men. Imagine a soccer mom that gets a **vision to make much of Christ as a soccer mom**. Of course it will start with her own children—pouring the gospel into them. But its going to effect how she conducts the rest of life—she might have **birthday parties where lost friends are always invited**; maybe she has a **dream for her kids that is bigger than morality and good grades**—to impart a vision for who Christ is and what he has done for them.

**Imagine the teenager that does not walk into the school room cafeteria**, asking where the coolest people who will accept her are, but instead is looking for the least of these—the people who don't have anybody. The lonely; confused; hurting.

This is the call for all of us—lose life, and gain the real one we were looking for, by making much of Christ. How are you aiming for that?

And let me **draw this contrast**, and then we can move on. I don't want you to **merely live a permissible life**. Like—"I don't do anything bad....I'm a good person." Ok, fine. But that's a good way to waste the years that you have. You were **made to know, treasure and make much of Christ**. Not just, be good. **Let's live lives—IT guy lives; teacher lives; business owner lives; single person lives....let's live those to know Christ; gain Christ; make much of Christ.**

## **2. Gives Grace to the Undeserving**

Now, **by saying that Jesus is the counterintuitive Savior** of the World, we are saying that there are **surprising things** in this text. Things we do not expect.

We've already seen one of those things: **Jesus moves away from honor** and toward dishonor.

Now, look at a second surprising thing in the text: I'm aiming toward verse 45, but let's begin at 43.

**Read 4:43-45**. What happens there?

Jesus leaves a place of honor for a place of dishonor, and when he gets to that place of dishonor, **what happens?**

*They welcome him.*

Weird.

Now, **why is it that they welcomed him?** At least two reasons:

1. They had been in **Jerusalem** when Jesus was there, and had **seen the signs** he had done.
2. **Read 46a.** Many of these people had either witnessed, or heard about Jesus turning the **water into wine** in the Galilean town of Cana.

Ok, so they welcomed him, it seems, **because he did cool stuff.** They loved his signs. He was there **hometown wonder boy.**

But notice that this is the **very thing about the Galileans that Jesus finds unsavory** Read **verse 46b-48.** So, you see the rebuke in that statement.

And the thing that is interesting about this **rebuke is that it is not only directed at the official.** Its directed at the **group of Galileans** that are apparently gathered around the conversation.

Both **“you’s”** in the verse 48 sentence are in the **plural.** So it seems that **Jesus uses the occasion of this official’s request to sound a rebuke** to all of the Galileans:

**interest in Jesus as a sign-worker, but not as the Messiah, is a deficient sort of interest. In fact, Jesus detests this sort of interest.**

So there is a **way to be interested in Jesus** that is not saving interest. A **kind of believing** that is not saving faith.

But there is **much to see about the beauty of Christ** in this little scene with the official, and I want you to see it.

**Notice first:** the text shapes up as a **rebuke** of the Jews in Galilee:

*We already saw the plural you....*

*Also....*

I think if we **go back to the statement** that John makes as the narrator, where he says, “the Galileans welcomed him,” and then we consider what he means by that—that they loved his signs, and Jesus was not impressed—we see that **John is putting a little bit of irony** in there...they **welcomed him.... but not really**

*and then....*

Its no accident that it’s the **Samaritans who get it** about Jesus’ identity. “You are the Savior of the world!” they say. Jews thought of Samaritans as half-breed, heretics.

All of these little pieces are **shaping up as a rebuke** of these Galileans Jews.

But notice in the middle of this rebuke--Jesus is gracious. He gives them so much better than they deserve.

How do the Galileans treat Jesus?—as gift giver rather than gift. As genie rather than treasure. As sign-doer rather than Savior.

And then John brings this official forward. A lot of translations call him a royal official. And that's a good translation. He was probably a part of King Herod's royal entourage.

So, in light of what a despicable character Herod was (he ordered the beheading of John the Baptist), it's reasonable to assume that his entourage was similarly despicable.

So, we have an apparent sign-seeker, who is probably an evil man, coming to Jesus looking for a miracle. He does not come confessing his sins. He just wants Jesus to fix his problem.

And what does Jesus do? He does the counterintuitive thing--he grants the man his request. He gives the man better than he deserves. He heals the son.

And you have to love how he does it. With a word (a thought) from 25 miles away (Jesus is in Cana; the boy is in Capernaum). And don't you know that this is nothing for Jesus?

--He just oozes power.

--You never seem him perspire when he casts out a demon.

He's the creator; the Almighty. He just does it.

But here's the thing I think we need to ask about this: How can Jesus do good to people that don't deserve this sort of good?

Or let me ask it this way: How could God be so generous, for example, to King David? After all, David (who committed adultery with Bathsheba and then murdered her husband Uriah to cover it up) is called the friend of God. It is from his line that Jesus comes.

Or we could ask it this way: How can I (a sinner myself) expect any good from this holy man Jesus?

Because you can be sure of one thing—Jesus does not sweep sin under the rug. Sometimes we do a terrible thing and think of God the Father as the mean part of the trinity, and Jesus as the softy. But no, Jesus is perfectly just. No sin goes unpunished with Jesus.

It is Jesus who in Matthew 12:36 says, "on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak,"

So then, how can Jesus be gracious and forgiving to people like this royal official; like you; like me; like King David?

Well, this goes back to his mission; it goes back to why sign doing is not the end game for Jesus. Jesus came to this earth, first and foremost, to die as a substitute for sinners.

Share the gospel....

Jesus is able to extend grace to sinners because he deals with their sins on the cross. If your sins were punished by God on Jesus at the cross, than God has nothing left for you but good and grace and mercy. The anger He has for your sin was dealt with in full at Calvary. Now, there is just grace and mercy.

Really this gospel is the most counterintuitive message in the whole world.

- A perfectly happy man gives up everything to save people who oppose him.
- And then makes those enemies into friends and sons.
- Not only friends, and sons, but co-heirs of all of his vast wealth.

Who makes an enemy into a co-heir of all the riches he possesses? Only the counter-intuitive Savior of the World.

A final point...

### 3. Brings good from suffering

It seems to me that what is happening with this royal official in our text is that Jesus is testing his faith to see if its like that of the rest of the Galileans—is it just a faith that looks for signs and wonders, or is there more substance to it?

#### Read 46-50

John says, “The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.” What is remarkable about this is that the man had asked Jesus to come with him. But when Jesus simply spoke, “Go; your son will live,” the man obeyed without a question. He believed and went. He did not insist on seeing the miracle. He did not complain that Jesus would not come with him. It seems to me that the sovereign authority of Jesus’ words in that moment evoked genuine faith in the royal official. He saw in Jesus, something more than a miracle worker.

And then we see that faith solidified later when he gets the report that his son is indeed alive.

Read 51-53. That language of “he and his household” is always used in the NT to denote genuine saving faith.

And here is the thing I want you to see: suffering is what moved this man toward Jesus.

No doubt, his son was precious to him. And this is a man of means. He is in the King’s entourage. He has servants. There can be no doubt that he had previously exhausted every means he knew in order to save his son, prior to walking 25 miles to visit a homeless carpenter. But, all of those things had let him down.

The thing that moved him toward Jesus was his suffering.

We think of trials as things that crush us.

But, Jesus, the counterintuitive Savior, thinks of them as a mercy because they move us away from the things that will fail us.

We base our lives on such **flimsy things**: people's opinion of me; my looks; my success compared to others, financial stability, my children's behavior, etc.

We **don't realize how central these props are until we begin to lose** those things. Isn't that what suffering usually is?

When **suffering comes, and those things begin to crumble**...that's when we **gravitate toward Jesus**.

So in his great love Jesus moves us away from these unreliable, flimsy things and to himself.

He treats us like sons.

**\*ill.\*** imagine how painful it was for the man in the parable about building your house on the sand. Imagine the suffering involved in seeing his life's investment wash away. But was it worth it for him?

One thing we can learn from the royal official as he suffers is that **he submits to the way that Jesus wants to write the story** of his life. He **does not argue** it; he **trusts it; and obeys**. You think about that moment there; Jesus issues his word of promise: "go, your son will live."

**If he goes, and Jesus is wrong, hope is lost.** Its more than a day's journey home. This is truly his LAST hope.

**How many promises that Jesus was spoken to us** in the Bible do we argue away with the "unique circumstances" of our own lives....but Jesus.....

But this **official sees in Jesus a sovereign power that builds faith**. And so he believes, and obeys.

Our failure to trust in Jesus is **usually related to a trust in self**. But think about that for a second—how has trusting in self gone for most of your life?

The things we would trust in **are so flimsy**. They **fade; they change; they are at the mercy of so many factors outside our control**. Jesus is an unchanging, all knowing, rock. He thinks a dying boy back to life from 25 mountainous miles away.

You may be here and your in the **midst of suffering**. I **don't have every answer** for you. But just this one encouragement—**don't waste your trial by trying to resurrect the things** that you use to depend on. Its likely in your trial that God is seeking to move you off of those things, and to the **rock that is Christ**. He alone is worthy of clinging to; depending on.

**Conclusion**

So this is our Savior. This is our King. You were made to receive his grace; trust in Him as your Rock, and spend your days making much of Him. It is a great privilege to know him.