

the gospel of

# JOHN

witness to the light

## **JOHN: THE POWER OF HIS WORD**

*March 23, 2020*

Jeff Vanderstelt

Scripture Reference: John 4:43-54

Please stand for the reading of God's word.

After the two days he departed for Galilee. (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown). So when he 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. 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. When this man heard that Jesus had come to 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. So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus said to him, "Go, your son will live."

The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. 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." The Father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he believed, and all his household. This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

This is the word of God. Please be seated.

Well, hello family. I am sad that we can't gather together, but I'm glad that technology allows us to do this together and I'm excited about the idea that we are going to get to experience the Lord work in us new ways. The Spirit of God is going to work on our hearts and change us and form our faith in new ways in this season and we believe God's going to still do a mighty work in this area. So I'm continuing to be full of hope -- I miss seeing you, but I'm glad that we get to be together in other ways. I love if we could start with prayer before we talk about this text. Let's pray.

Father we come to you and we acknowledge that we are in a desperate place. We need you. We need you to be at work in our hearts. We need your Spirit to remind us of your presence. We need to remember that you see us, know us, know what we need and are a good loving God and Father to us. We pray that you'd show us how to love one another well in this season that you would teach us how to walk in your ways in maybe ways we'd never thought we would have to, but we pray you'd help us to do it for our good, for the good of our neighbors, for the good of our family, for the good of our city and our country, but also Lord for your glory and most importantly that Jesus's fame would grow. So we even now, as we look at your word, we pray you teach us and that you'd help us to take in the very things you want us to receive from your Spirit. Now in Jesus name, amen.

Hopefully you have your Bibles open. I want you to look at this text in John chapter four starting in verse 43 and the setup of this is Jesus just spent two days in Samaria. You remember Donald spoke on this last week. And of course he was very well received and we see a massive turning to Jesus, a huge act of faith where the Spirit of God leads many in Samaria to come to faith in Jesus.

And this is a really intentional location in terms of this story being placed in this text at this time. John wants to tell the story of outsiders, Samaritans, and even what we're going to hear now, a noble man, probably likely a Gentile coming to faith in Jesus because in the midst of all of this, the Jews are still opposing him and they're primarily loving what Jesus does, but they aren't loving Jesus. They're still not convinced he's the Messiah. He's the son of God.

And so John, in highlighting the fact that these people are coming to him to check him out, he highlights the idea that they're coming to him because of the signs they saw him do in Jerusalem. Another way of saying this is they love the signs, but they don't love the Savior.

See, the concept here is John is wanting through his entire gospel to tell the narrative of Jesus in such a way that the Jews who've rejected Jesus would realize that they missed the Messiah. And so every story he's going to tell is for the intent of waking them up to the reality that they never saw Jesus as who he really was. John said this early in chapter one verse 11 that Jesus, he came to his own but his own people did not receive him.

So Jesus is walking through all these stories in such a way that he's highlighting that his own people are rejecting him and he's pointing to certain people that are so that we might get -- kind of get the idea that it's very possible to love Jesus for what he does but still miss him altogether.

Now, here's part of what's going on in this story is that every story is meant to wake up somebody else, not just the person in the middle of the story, but the people that are watching the story. I wonder as we think about our own story, if we've ever thought that God might be doing that in our lives, that God might be using your story in particular, how we respond in this situation as a way to wake somebody else up to the nature of God's work in our lives.

Maybe there's some of you that are watching this right now and you're just starting to realize that God's using someone else in your life, a friend, a neighbor, a coworker, maybe a family member, and God's wanting their story to be highlighted in your life so that you will wake up to the nature of God at work right around you in somebody else.

In this text, we're going to see God's word, Jesus in particular, the Word of God being powerful -- and as he speaks, we see Jesus in his powerful words rebuking, we see him redirecting, and we're going to see that redirection leads to redemption.

And that's what God does in our lives as he speaks to us through his word, both the written word as well as by his Spirit, through Jesus, the Living Word -- he brings a rebuke at times and says, you're wrong or you're going the wrong way. Sometimes he brings a redirection and says, here's the way I want you to think differently or walk differently. And in that process, as we follow him, we experience him redeeming our stories and situations.

So let's look at verse 46 together.

So he came again to Cana in Galilee where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was official whose son was ill.

Now this official is a nobleman likely working for King Herod and most believe he's a Gentile, working for the Roman occupation at the moment.

Verse 47, When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and he asked him --

And the word there is he literally continued to beg him over and over and over again, begging Jesus to come down and heal his son for he was at the point of death. This man is desperate. He's watched his son go from a runny nose to a fever, to a fever that's so bad that it's put him to the point of death, likely in a coma and he has nowhere else to go. He has no other hope to turn to. But word has travelled that there is a man named Jesus and Cana especially knows about Jesus because of the water being turned to wine and this man is traveling from Capernaum to Cana -- it's about 16-17 miles -- that's a five/six hour journey to find Jesus. He knows he's got no other hope.

For many of us, that desperation is where many of us find ourselves in. I know some of you are there right now. You're in a place of desperation when you're saying, man, my son or my daughter needs God to intervene, to heal, or to rescue, to bring them back.

Others of you, it's a husband or a wife, a father or mother or brother or sister. Many of us are in that place of desperation. We're saying, I've got nowhere else to turn. I've got no one else to hope in. And in the present situation, we're all feeling that to a degree. We're presently in a world where everyone's feeling desperate. Everybody's wondering, how are we going to make it through this? Who are we going to turn to? Who's going to help?

And every time we experienced a point of desperation, we run out of options. We don't know where to run. Almost everybody finally turns back to God in some way or another. That's happening right now. A lot of people are desperate and they're crying out.

Family, we have a great opportunity in front of us right now. People are wondering where they're going to go for hope. They're wondering who's going to help. People are feeling alone and isolated, and we have an opportunity in our present situation to respond in such a way to Jesus and his present help in our time of need in such a way that others will get to watch and see that we believe in a God who is a God of hope, and a God who can heal, a God who can deliver.

We can learn a lot from this father in this story and how he responds in his place of desperation.

Verse 48, So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe."

Jesus starts with a rebuke. Are you kidding? Jesus, really? This man's desperate. His son's going to die and you respond with a rebuke? What's going on?

Have you ever felt like this? Have you ever been at a place of desperation? You feel like you've tried everything. You have nowhere to turn and you finally turn to God and you cry out for help? And the response to you is not what you had hoped for. It's not maybe as soon as you had hoped or it's not exactly what you thought he would do. Ever been in that place?

I think if we're honest, all of us have been in that place. And what we need to remember, and we're going to see this in John, but we can see this in all of our stories, that there's a far bigger story going on in your life. It's not ultimately just about you. In this case, it's not just about the father. It's not just about his son. In John's gospel, he kind of zooms out. He wants to see there's a bigger story going on here and the way Jesus responded to this man is not just something wrong with the father, but he's speaking to a larger audience.

In fact, the actual word "you", unless "you" see signs and wonders "you" will not believe is plural -- It's not a singular "you". He's not speaking directly to the father. He's speaking to all the people who are watching about and looking to see what God's going to do in this moment. If you're from the South, it's like he's saying, unless you all -- or y'all -- see signs and wonders, ya'll will not believe.

And what we need to hear is that Jesus isn't just talking to the crowds looking on, he's talking to us. He talking to everybody who's going to read this story as we pay attention to the father's faith and how he responds to Jesus's words.

Let me ask you this -- Why do you run to Jesus? Why do you follow him?

I think for many of us, we're like the crowd and we want Jesus because of what he can do for us. When we're desperate, we need help. When we're in need, we turn to Jesus.

But can you imagine if the only reason someone got married is because they were only concerned about what the other person could do for them, and when they no longer did what they wanted, they rejected them. Unfortunately, that's a lot of marriages these days. That we get into relationship primarily for what the person can give us instead of because we love the person regardless of whether they give us anything.

And to a degree Jesus is addressing that problem right now with the people. They love the giver of the gift -- or they love the gifts but they don't love the giver. They love the signs but they don't love the Savior. They love what he can do, but they don't love who he is.

And I just want to ask you that question. Do you love the gifts? Do you love the Giver? Do you love the signs or do you love the Savior? Do you love what he can do or do you love who he is?

And you know how you can know? You only go to him when you're in trouble. You only go to him when you need something. You only go to him when things are bad and you forget and when things are good. And then when you don't get what you want or the way that you want it, you just walk away.

What's really amazing about Jesus is that no matter how many times you do that, no matter how many times I do that, he doesn't walk away. He just continues to stay and wait and pursue and never give up on you. He is so kind to you. He's so gracious. I'm so thankful he doesn't treat us the way we treat him.

You know, sometimes Jesus's grace comes in the form of a rebuke. Sometimes Jesus has got to bring a hard word to you and I. He's got to say to us, are you only going to believe if you see signs? Are you only going to stay with me if it goes well? Are you only about what can give and not who I am?

See, arrogance says this, Jesus, this is what I need -- this is the way I want it, and if you don't give it to me the way I want it, I'm walking away.

And Jesus, you know what he says to you, I'm not here at your beck and call. I'm not here to give you whatever you think you want because the reality is you don't have a clue half the time what you really need. But I do.

And so Jesus at times will say, no, I'm not going to give you what you're asking for because it's not the best. I'm not going to give you in the way you want it. I'm going to give you it in the way

I want it. Cause I know you. I know what's best for you. And it's not just about you. There's a bigger story going on around you.

The story isn't just about you. Many of you have maybe heard of Joni Eareckson Tada. She grew up in a very athletic family. One day she was out swimming in a pond and she dove into the water and hadn't checked the depth of water before she dove in and she hit her head when she went in and broke her spine, and in that moment became a paraplegic.

Joni tells a story of when she's in the hospital right after the accident, laying in the hospital bed and she looks over and sees another woman who's even worse than her. Not only can this woman not move anything from her shoulders down, but she can't even move anything in her head -- can't talk.

Joni found out this woman had a faith in Jesus, and as she kind of watched her deteriorate, she watched her die. And as she watched her die, Joni cried out to God -- How could you let this happen? This woman didn't do anything to deserve this. This woman didn't even get to glorify you. She didn't get to speak of the story of what you're like and what you did. What's in it? Why did you do this? What are you up to?

And the Spirit brought her to Hebrews chapter 12 -- that we're surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses. And the Spirit in that moment impressed on Joni's heart that this woman wasn't living for an audience in the room. She was living for an audience that couldn't be seen. All those had gone before her, all the angelic hosts, all the unseen realms that were watching how she trusted God in the worst situation ever. That forever changed Joni's life. And she from that moment said, what if I lived every moment as though the story wasn't just about me, but it was about all those who are watching God's work in my life? What if I can be a demonstration of God to everyone else by the way I respond the circumstance I'm in?

Many of you know Joni has gone on to write over 40 books, record several records, learned how to paint with holding a paintbrush in her mouth. She said, I want to devote my life -- even in this situation to glorify God because people are watching -- the angelic hosts are praising God because of his work in my life.

Family, what if we live that way right now? What if we lived in such a way that we knew there was a great host of witnesses observing God's work in our life and giving God praise in the heavenly realms -- that the angels are watching to see how we're going to respond in this moment to see -- do we love God when it goes well and walk away when it doesn't? Or will we love him and cling to him regardless of our circumstance, because he's always faithful and he can provide for us in our hopeless situation, in ways that we could never determine or figure out on our own. Who knows in the situation if our faith doesn't actually grow more than it ever has before?

So what does the father do? He persists.

In verse 49, The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

He just won't give up -- I love it. I can imagine thinking to himself, well, maybe I needed that rebuke? Or maybe the crowd needed that rebuke? But I don't care. My son's dying. Nothing's going to stop me from pleading my case before Jesus. I'm not giving up until he does something about this.

And I love that persistence, family. In fact, I wanna encourage you -- don't give up on crying out to God even if you're wrong in the way you've done it. As you pray, the Spirit of God will change the way you pray.

Don't give up. Jesus may bring a rebuke to the very question you bring to him or the requests that you offer to him, but in the rebuke, he wants to change the way you pray and change the way you posture yourself.

So the guy doesn't give up.

Sometimes the worst of times in our lives become the best of times because the worst of times lead us to the end of our self, to the point at which we say, God, if you don't, I can't.

And I really believe we have an opportunity in front of us like that right now. To say that we could look at this and say, this is really bad or we could say, man, what a great opportunity for all of us to come to the end of our ability and cry out to the God who can do far more than we could ever ask or imagine.

Jesus said to him, "Go, your son will live."

Literally, that's translated "your son is now alive".

And the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and he went on his way.

First Jesus rebukes him. Then he redirects him.

See what's going on here in this situation is that Jesus wants to crowd to realize the rebuke is meant to lead to a redirection that they've been perceiving Jesus wrongly. They've been looking for the wrong thing. They put their attention on the wrong focus.

And he wants to redirect their attention to the right thing, the thing that they should be looking for, which is faith in Jesus. Not in the signs, but in the person. He also is going to redirect the father because the father has a sense of what he thinks should happen. Jesus, you got to come to my house -- the only way my son's going to get better is if you come with me -- take the hike, it's only five or six miles, run with me to the house. If you touch him, if you're there, everything will change.

And listen to what Jesus says. No, you go home.

He denies him the request, but then he answers at the same time, go home because your son now is alive and he's well.

I love it because Jesus doesn't give them the sign. He doesn't give the crowd what they're longing for. I can imagine that they're going like, yes, let's take the hike with Jesus -- let's go to his house, let's watch it happen again. And Jesus goes, this time I'm not giving you that. You're not going to get to see a sign. You're just going to hear my word, and my word is enough. And until you realize that my word is enough, you'll always be looking for something else. And until you accept my word, you will not accept me.

And the man accepts Jesus's word.

This is a very significant move in John's narrative, because at this point, John is now highlighting what he said in the prologue, that the Word was with God, the Word was God. The Word was the means by which all things came into existence. And that Word took on flesh, and that Word is Jesus. And that Word who is Jesus is the one in whom his life and that life is the light of men. And now Jesus speaks as the Word and he speaks a word, and that word gives life to the father's son.

His word is powerful.

He doesn't even have to touch him. He doesn't even have to be near him.

So the world says this -- If I see it, I'll believe it. Seeing is believing.

But the Bible is really clear that faith -- the faith that helps us make it through the storm -- is able to see without believing. In fact, we could say it another way, that the one who has faith in Jesus' word is getting to experience that believing is actually seeing.

That's what happens to the father. He believes Jesus' word and there's no way he would leave Jesus and run home unless in the eyes of his faith, he was able to see his son rise up.

And that's what the Bible talks about when it talks about faith. If you want to look at Hebrews 11 later, it talks about all these people who walk by faith and most of them never got to see with their physical eyes the fulfillment of God's promises, but they didn't stop trusting in God, and it was the eyes of faith that enabled them to see before they can ever physically see.

They believe God and God gave them spiritual sight to trust him. And it was as if they saw the future happening in the present as they believe that God would fulfill his word because God always does.

For a lot of us that's where we're at right now. We need to have a kind of faith that believes in Jesus, so that in our believing, we can begin to see him answer our prayers, we can see him entering our desperate state, we can see him bring healing to sickness, we can see him bringing all things and making them new one day.

But I could imagine the guy saying to himself, okay, Jesus that's great, maybe you can do that, but how about if you take the hike with me? Let's just walk with me home, and that way if, if it doesn't work, I still got a backup plan.

And I wonder if that's, a lot of us -- we're like, yeah, I believe his word and I pray and I trust that he can do it, but just in case he doesn't, I've got another plan on the back -- got something to fall on.

And I wonder how many times we say to God, I won't believe until I see. As a result, we never really experienced the gift of faith giving us the ability to walk through the storms of life. Because if you only believe when you see that when things are really horrible, you're going to run away. You're not going to have what it takes to make it through because you actually don't believe God has what it takes to get you through.

But he believes that Jesus is trustworthy. He believes that his word is good -- and not just good, but powerful.

I love this -- in Jesus not answering the guy's request exactly how he asked it, Jesus actually elevates his faith. He's going to give them an opportunity to show that Jesus has got a whole lot more he can do than what the man ever realized.

That's how faith works by the way. Faith -- the Bible says that it comes through hearing, in particular through hearing the word of God. That we have to hear God in his word as we read the Bible and the Spirit gives us the ability to hear God speak to us as we read it. As we hear it, and especially hear the word of the gospel of Jesus Christ coming to live in our place to die, the death we deserve, to be buried and take our sins to the grave, to rise again, victoriously over sin, Satan and death -- when we hear that word, the Spirit of God gives us faith to believe what we can't see.

And then believing is seeing, and we put our trust in Jesus, and then not only are we given the gift of faith through hearing the word, but we grow in faith by trusting the Word and obeying the Word and walking in line with the Word.

Maclaren of Manchester said it this way, "The way to increase our faith is to exercise faith. The true parent of perfect faith is the experience of the blessings that come from the crudest, rudest, narrowest blindest, feeblest faith that a man can exercise."

I love that, he's not saying your faith has got to be great, just take the faith you have and step out with it.

"Trust him as you can. Do not be afraid of inadequate conceptions or of a feeble grasp. Trust him as you can, and he will give you so much more than you expected, that you will trust him even more."

I've found this to be so true in my life that when God first gave me the gift of faith and then he called me to step out in faith. As I stepped out in faith, my faith grew stronger. And the more that I believed his word trusted him and what he said and obeyed him and did what he asked, the more my faith grew. And as my faith has grown, I had much stronger ability to face the

storm, to walk through the uncertain, to face even my own brokenness, confident that if God got me this far, he's not going to give up on me. He's going to finish what he started.

Let me ask you, what word has Jesus been speaking to you lately? How is he calling you to walk out in faith? Where is Jesus asking you to exercise that you have a faith that trusts he's big enough, strong enough, able enough to do what he wants to empower you to do?

Here's the thing I've found is God will never ask you to do something that he doesn't expect to join you in and enable you to do. That's the beauty of the Christian life is God doesn't call us to walk it for him -- he calls us to walk it with him. To walk with his power, to walk with his love, to walk with his grace, to walk even with his faith.

He wants to enable you to believe in new ways this season. What is he calling you to trust him in right now?

As you read the Bible, as you listen to messages like the one I'm giving right now, as you spend time in quiet through silence and solitude, what has God been saying to you lately? What's the word that he's been speaking to you? What's the faith step he's inviting you to take?

Whatever that is, go to him with that. Talk to him about that. Even if you're struggling to believe, say, God, I believe, but help me with my unbelief. And in this season God's going to call some of us to step out in ways that are going to grow our faith.

This man was told to go home without seeing his son actually raised up, but he had to believe that it was true and walk away from Jesus the only hope he had in that moment.

For some of us, it's going to look like leading our families in new ways. Some of you, moms and dads are going to, you're going to learn how to pray with your family. You're gonna learn how to open their Bibles together and talk about what God's doing and teaching them to hear the word of the Lord and step out and faith themselves.

There's others of you are to be asked to step out and love a neighbor -- of course carefully, but you're going to be asked to do new things. Maybe you've kept some people at arms length and God's saying, I want you to get near to them at least through prayer this season. Begin to pray for them.

Some of us are going to have resources that we're going to get to give away to serve and help others. But all of us, are going to be called to step out and hear God's word, obey it by walking out in faith in new ways. And as a result, you will get to grow in faith. God will elevate your ability to trust in him more and more.

After this father receives Jesus' rebuke and obeys his redirection and runs home, he gets to experience redemption.

Verse 51, As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering, so he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him "Yesterday at the

seventh hour -- which is about one o'clock -- the fever left him." 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.

In that moment, the father realized -- yes, what Jesus said was true. Exactly when it happened - - it happened at home -- when Jesus said it, his son got better.

And I want you to hear this family 'cause we really need to hear this right now -- Jesus' word is so powerful and far reaching that we don't even need to be together for him to work.

We don't have to be in the same building. We don't have to be in the same house. All we need to do is be with him and then be with him on behalf of one another. We can cry out to him in prayer and his word can speak to another place and bring life into another household.

And we're going to learn how to depend on him in ways that we've never depended on him before because if we're not, if we're not honest, we all have to admit -- if we're honest, we all have to admit, we take a whole lot more confidence in our ability to be with people, say the right thing, pray the right prayer, even lay hands on one another -- which are all good things -- but God's going to show you, he doesn't need you to do that to still work in this season.

He just wants you to come to him and cry out to him in desperation and he can heal somebody without you being near them.

He can rescue somebody from the darkness of being in unbelief in ways that you could have never done.

And I'm convinced in this next season we're going to see God work in such a way that we will all know it was only God who did it and we won't be able to take credit for anything because we can't hardly do anything but pray right now.

And yet that's one of the greatest things we get to do because we get to pray to somebody whose word is powerful and whose word is far reaching to the ends of the earth.

Your prayers, family have power. If you're praying to the one who has power.

I'm convinced this could be the greatest hour of the church, not just here but all over the earth, because we may get to see God pour out his Spirit in every household. I'm praying personally for revivals in the households. I'm praying for healing. I'm praying for the light to break in and ways that we could have never brought it.

And at the end of the day, we're all gonna look back and we gonna say, Jesus built his church and the gates of hell did not prevail. And neither did the coronavirus. He will have his way and he will accomplish his work and he will do it through his people praying for him to work.

I love how the father didn't just get there and get around the son and celebrate, but he stopped -- the first thing he asks is, when did it happen? Tell me. And they tell him the hour and he at

that point says, I want you to understand that this happened at this moment when Jesus spoke the word. He wants Jesus to get credit for what Jesus did. And as a result, his whole household comes to faith.

My wife, Jayne, will often be woken up in the middle of the night -- or some time along the day -- She'll just have this thought pop into her head: pray for this person. And I'm amazed at how many times she's woken up at night or she's going through her day and the Spirit of God tells her to pray, and then a day later, two days later, sometimes weeks later, someone will reach out to us and say, I was going through this really difficult time, this really dark time, this really hopeless time -- I was under spiritual attack, our kid was being brought to the emergency room and all of a sudden I just felt the Spirit of God come over us and give us hope and set us free and bring light.

And Jayne will say, when did it happen? Tell me the exact day, the exact hour. And sure enough, every single time Jayne will say that's the moment God told me to start praying for you.

And I love this on many fronts. One -- that proves that God is at work all over the earth, waking us up to pray and participate in his work wherever he's at work. But, two -- what I love about my wife is she doesn't want anyone to get credit but God. He did it. He woke her up. He led her to pray. He answered the prayer. God's going to do that for us. In these coming days. He's going to wake you up.

He's going to give you someone's name or situation. He's going to say, start praying and I want to, I want to encourage you, family. In fact, I want to exhort you when that happens start praying because God is at work and he wants to show you that he can work through you in your house, in isolation as you seek him and pray.

He's going to do that. And I anticipate we're going to get to tell stories of people getting healed. People coming to faith, families being reunited, marriages being repaired, darkness being removed. Pray to the one who's word is powerful and the one whose word is far reaching. He hears you. He's at work. Even if you're not there.

I wonder how many times we pray and we see God answer and then we don't tell anybody. We don't give him the credit.

And what I love about this story is the man doesn't just give Jesus the credit so that his son will know, but his whole household comes to faith as a result of him pointing to Jesus as the only reason this happened. And this next season you and I are going to get to have many, many opportunities to tell people the hope that's in us. We're going to get to tell them how we make it through our days without going crazy, becoming homeschool parents where we never agreed to do this.

We're going to have lots of opportunities to say, how do we make it and still have joy and not fall into depression? How do we not just fall into binge watching Netflix, but we continue to have time for people, even if we have to be really careful about how we do it.

And every single time you get those opportunities, every single time God answers a prayer. Every single time you find yourself full of faith and hope and love, tell them it's because of Jesus.

A friend of mine is leading a church and he said what they're praying for right now and they're asking their church to pray for is that God would give each one of them at least one opportunity every week to tell somebody who doesn't know Jesus about what Jesus is up to right now in this day.

Family, I'd love for us to say that we'd love to see the same thing happen, that we'd pray, God would you open a door for me to brag on Jesus this week? Would you give me an opportunity to tell the people why I still have hope? Would you open a door for me to share that he's been present with me and I'm not alone, even though I know many of us feel isolate -- I'm not alone in the isolation. Family, I want to encourage you to do that. Pray -- God, would you give me an opportunity this week to give somebody hope in Christ in the middle of this situation?

And then when he does, tell others about it, because he is moving and preparing and making people ready for this.

And I know we're going to struggle, family. It's not going to be easy. Some of you are going, man, I've been receiving -- even as you're preaching, Jeff, I'm receiving a rebuke. I feel like God's trying to redirect me; I had this plan and I feel like he's been pushing me this way, but I don't want to go there. I don't know if I trust him enough to do it.

But I want to remind you that God is not giving up on you, but he's going to keep rebuking, redirecting you until you submit to him and follow him. And I don't want you to hear a word of condemnation or shame or guilt -- I want you to hear this:

God, the Father didn't rescue his own son when he could have. Unlike the father in this story, he let his son go to the cross even though Jesus said, Father, if there's another way, let it be possible, but nevertheless, not my will be done, but your will be done in the father said, there's no other way.

And instead of rescuing his son from death, he delivered his son unto death for you and me. And he went to the cross and he took on your sin and your shame and your guilt, even for the ways we've not responded to his present rebuke -- even the ways we haven't realigned according to his new redirection our life. He went to the cross and he said, Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing.

And there was an hour for him to just like there was an hour for this man's son, but the hour for Jesus was a dark hour. The whole place grew dark because the wrath of God was being poured out and Jesus satisfied the wrath of God through his death on the cross, that you and I would never have to stand up under the wrath of God because it was taken care of in Jesus' death for you and me.

And then he went to the grave, buried all the condemnation that our sin deserves. And he rose again, victorious over Satan, sin and death so that we can face everything, including this virus, knowing that he is victorious over absolutely everything. And when we failed to trust him and we fail to follow him and we fail to walk in faith in his word -- he is still gracious because he died for all those ways we will fail to follow him and trust him and obey him in this coming season.

So family, I want you to be encouraged. You're going to falter -- but when you do, know that it's already been taken care of, you're already forgiven -- there's no shame, no more guilt, no more fear of punishment because the Father gave up his own son for you and me so that we could become the children of God dearly loved and accepted.

We're that son in the story, aren't we? That the Father gave up Jesus so that we could be the son that he raises to new life. So that through the word spoken, when it was spoken on the cross, you and I would be given life eternal starting today.

My prayer, if you don't yet believe that that maybe today as I'm saying that the Spirit of God may be granting you faith to finally realize that you need the Father in heaven, God himself, to raise you up into new life through Jesus Christ.

Put your faith in him. Trust in his word. It is powerful and it's far reaching, and it may be reaching you right now. Receive it. Believe it. And in believing you'll see that God is far more able to do more than you could ever ask or imagine today and forever.

And family, those of you who do believe it, I want to encourage all of us to keep walking out in faith in the word that is powerful and far reaching and can do far more than we could ever ask or imagine this day. Amen.

Let's pray.

Father, I'm so thankful that you weren't desperate, that you weren't crying out, hopeless and helpless, but you were completely in charge and still are. And when you saw our sin and you saw the sickness that it produced and you saw that it leads to death, you weren't, you weren't worried. You knew that you had a plan, you knew that you had a provision, you knew that you could save us and you did. And Jesus, you came, you lived, you died, you rose again so that we could be raised up, so that we could be the son who's given life because of you being the word spoken over our dead lives.

We again receive that right now as our only hope and we pray as we've received your word by faith, that you continue to help us to exercise faith, to walk out in obedience. Lord, this season is going to require you building up our faith. You elevated this man's faith by redirecting his request in such a way that he would realize you could do far more than he could have ever imagined. We need that in this season.

We need you to keep redirecting our steps so that we'll walk in ways that will show you to be far more powerful than we probably ever knew. Would you pour out your Spirit on us? Would

you pour out your Spirit on our households? Would you enable us to be a people filled with faith who walk in such a remarkable way that people will have to ask, how did this happen? And we will tell them it was you.

Jesus be glorified. Through our lives in this season, accomplish your purposes in our desperation. Be our hope. We pray in your name Jesus. Amen.

Want to encourage you to respond in line with the next questions, and process, and songs that we put together in the digital liturgy for you. I found even in my own household, taking a moment right now and just saying, what is God saying to you? What are you going to do about it? How do we need to respond?

I've had some really good conversations with my own kids. And I wanna encourage you to take the time to talk about this, to pray for one another, and even if you want to, to take communion together as you remember Jesus.

Family, I love you very much, praying for you. Can't wait to see you again. But until then, just continue to trust God's at work beyond the reach of our own arms. Love you.