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October 14, 2018

JOHN 4:43-54

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Lord, I pray that you would help us this morning as we look at your word. As we teach our children, Lord, we ask that you'd help them to understand that the Bible is different than any other book they read. When we read your word, you're actually speaking to us and touching our hearts, changing us, growing us, and feeding us spiritually in that area where we definitely need your help. So now as we open your word we do it solemnly and prayerfully. We want to open our hearts now to whatever you might have for us. Humble us, Lord, before you as we open your word. We ask that you'd speak to us in a way that would touch us. In Jesus' name, amen.

When we study God's word, we want to do it with an attitude of reverence, but also with this sense of openness to God speaking, which means I think we ask this question. Whenever we're reading the Bible, whether a young person or an adult, whenever you're reading the Bible, you want to read a portion and ask this question: What's the lesson learned? In other words, how is this going to change me? What am I going to do differently? The Bible is designed to be that vehicle for God to speak to us, so we want to ask that practical question.

Now today as we open up our Bibles to John 4, God is going to speak. And if you'll listen to what He has to say and you do what He says, then your life will be changed. So I want you to think about how God might want to speak to you today in that context then we're going to read this passage.

So open your Bibles with me to John 4 and we're going to take the last section of the passage starting at verse 43. I want to read this story to you and then we're going to see how we can draw some applications for our lives from this passage. Would you please stand with me as we read John 4 starting at verse 43.

After the two days he left for Galilee. (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there.

Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

"Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

*The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.”
“Go,” Jesus replied, “your son will live.”*

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, “Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him.” Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and his whole household believed. This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

You may be seated.

Notice that it says in the passage as we start the passage – *After the two days he left for Galilee.* If you haven’t been with us, let me remind you that the two days were the days that He was in Samaria. He visited with a woman at the well and then the woman at the well went and told the townsfolk. The townsfolk were really interested in this living water, so they asked Jesus to stay for two days in Samaria. This was not a very safe place for Jews, but because they welcomed Him, they stayed there and He ministered to them and taught them. That’s what we’re referring to in the two days. So after two days then He left for Galilee.

Let me show you this on a map so you just get the geographical picture of what’s happening. Samaria’s down here at the bottom where Jesus was, a little south of our map. But He goes up here to Cana. There’s Cana right there and then Capernaum, the other city we’re going to look at is right up here. Those are your two cities, about a twenty-mile walk. Twenty miles from one to the other. That’s where our story takes place today.

Let’s look at the story and try to learn some things from Jesus’ words. Every word that Jesus says is worth listening to, hanging onto, trying to understand how we might apply it.

Listen to what He says here. This is applicable for all of us. *After the two days he left for Galilee. (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.)* What he’s saying is that in His own country people knew who He was. They were familiar with Him and this familiarity caused the honor level to decrease. Honor means value. So they didn’t value Him.

Now He grew up in Nazareth in this Galilee region, so they knew who He was. He was the son of a carpenter. He was the oldest son of several brothers and sisters that lived up there with Mary. They knew who He was, but there was no sense that He was the Son of God. Now they’ve heard He’s done these miracles in Jerusalem or He’s done this authoritative thing of casting the moneychangers out and speaking with authority, so they’re recognizing something about Him. But the statement is an important one that He said *a prophet has no honor in his own country.* There is a tendency in our world to take for granted those that we’re closest to. That’s the point that’s being made.

Let me show you another place where Jesus says something very similar. It says in Mark 6:4 – *Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.”* Honor. It’s a sense of value. And the reality that Jesus is saying is there is

a tendency for it to decrease with familiarity when we're with people. That's why sometimes the people that we love, the people that we live with, we don't treat them as well as we treat the people at work. There's a sense of honor. It has a tendency to decrease and God would expect us then to decrease that.

We need to be working on honor in our lives. Honor is a sense of value. Treating each other with value. It's a great lesson. We can stop right there and all go home and try to value each other. I think it's a great idea.

Now it's interesting. Nine commands in the Bible use the word *honor*. Nine of them. On our body, on our government officials, on our pastors, on our widows. You go right down the line, all these nine commands. But my favorite one is this one in Romans 12:10. Because God is just exhorting us to value other people above ourselves. So *honor one another above yourselves*.

Eight times in the Bible it says – *Children, honor your father and mother*. Kids, you've got to listen to that. Young people, listen to that. There's a temptation to dishonor parents. Eight times in the Bible it says to *honor your father and mother*. Why? Well because that's where honor is learned. If you can learn it at home, you'll be able to apply it in those nine other areas or in all those other areas of life. It's customer service brought home. It's learned in the home. When children learn to respect and honor their parents, good things happen, but it takes training. So I'd encourage you parents, train your kids to learn about honor because when they learn it, it's not just about treating you nicely, it's about giving them a life skill they'll use for the rest of their lives. Very important. If we can grab onto that idea of honor, it will transform the way we relate.

Jesus is making reference to that comment when He says above that *a prophet has no honor in his own country*. Just think about those people that you tend to take for granted. It might be at work, home, wherever, and look for ways to demonstrate. Work against the tendency, I would suggest is what Paul is telling us in Romans 12:10.

Well that's a little of a tangent. It's in parenthesis. Let's go on in the story and see what else God has to say for us.

Verse 45 says – *When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there. Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And (here's our story now) there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.*

Does God care about physical health? Does Jesus care about sickness? Well we know He does because there's so many times when He made people well. Right? He healed the lepers, He healed the blind man, He healed the lame who couldn't walk, He healed Mary Magdalene. He even rose a guy from the dead. I mean health was important to Jesus. And so a lot of times He was healing people.

Do you believe that God cares about your health? Well I think you must because if you're like me, there's a lot of prayers that go up when health is an issue. I pray that God will heal me on my headache or take away a problem that I'm dealing with or a symptom. I go to the Lord because health is important to me and I know that God has power to do something about that health. Although I think that one of the greatest pains, besides our own health, that we come to the Lord about is when someone else that we love is sick.

Here's a man whose son is really sick. I can just imagine the dad holding him, caring for him, putting water on his head. He's got a fever. The kid's got a problem and it looks like he's going to die. You know how it is when somebody has a fever. They're just so lethargic. The dad is really afraid, I'm sure, for his son and just in pain because his child is so sick. I know that some of you know that pain of someone else that you love being hurt, sick, and so you would be able to identify with this guy. He wants to do everything that he can do, so he hears that Jesus is just twenty miles away. Twenty miles. So he goes the trek twenty miles away, leaves his son there, and he goes twenty miles, and he begs. Just look at the terminology. *He begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.*

Let's look at Jesus' response. Now Jesus used the opportunity to do some teaching. We're going to learn something about our faith here that I think may be helpful for all of us. He says to them... And the *you* is plural here. He's not just talking to the man. He's says *you people*. He's talking to a group of people. He says this: "*Unless you people see signs and wonders,*" *Jesus told him, "you will never believe."*

Jesus is making a statement about experiential faith. So I want us to ask the question this morning: What strengthens your faith? Because if your faith is only experiential... Now I think experiential faith is good. But if it's only experiential then you're going to have a problem when healing doesn't come into your life. You're going to have a problem when the circumstances aren't great. You're going to have a problem when you've got to hang in there for a long period of time without seeing some answer for prayer. If you're only looking for experiential faith, you're going to find yourself disappointed with God because He didn't do what you thought He was going to do. There's something bigger here and Jesus is trying to illustrate that and help these people understand something very important.

Signs and wonders? You guys just have to see signs and wonders and then you believe? That's the statement He's making. If you just have to see signs and wonders in order for your faith to grow, you've got a problem. It's not very strong. So when things aren't going your way, you're not going to have the faith to deal with it. That's really what we're learning in this passage.

Notice the royal official doesn't care about theology right now. He's got a problem in his life. He didn't even want to talk about that. *The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."* I want you to come, leave Cana, I want you to come over to Capernaum and I want you to provide an experience for me. I want you to heal this child of mine.

Jesus replied to the man, "Go, your son will live." *The man took Jesus at his word and departed.* Now I want you to see the difference between experiential faith and the depth of faith that comes with the roots of the word. Notice that. *The man took Jesus at his word and departed.* He left

without the healing there. There was a period of time he had to wait before he saw whether the healing would take place or not and it's during that time that he had to have faith. His faith was deeper because, notice the words, he *took Jesus at his word*.

There are going to be times in your life when you're not going to have the experience you wish you had. You're going to pray and God may not answer the prayer as fast as you would like or in the way that you would like. And what happens then? What are you going to do? Are you going to be disappointed with God? Are you going to blame God for that? Then you have a weak faith.

There's a faith that grows in depth when you're able to embed it in the word of God and take the word of God and rely on that in your life. The hard part, it seems to me, are the delays. When it takes time for the answer to come or time for the solution to work out or time to know what's going to happen. It's the time, right? I mean in our modern time it's from the time you get the biopsy till you get the results. Right? It's the time that it takes you start feeling the symptoms and you get an appointment to finally get into the doctor. It's that time that can be anxiety producing. I want to suggest that in those waiting times, those can be times when God does something really deep in our lives. Do you have to have signs and wonders in order for your faith to be strong? Or can your faith grow deeper in the waiting period? That's a real important thing for us to do in our lives is to be able to know how to respond in those waiting times.

Let's look at David in the Old Testament. I think in this psalm David is able to express his heart to God. This is the feeling, I think, that the nobleman or the royal official was feeling or that we feel when things don't happen as fast as we would like. David, who was an author of the psalms, often was having to wait. If Saul was persecuting him, trying to attack him, he didn't get the kingship right away even though it was promised him, all kinds of things. He had to wait a lot. There's a lot of time delay. And so David in the psalm in a poetic way calls out to the Lord and says these words: *I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me. I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched.*

Do you feel the pain of waiting? Waiting for an answer. I know some of you right now are waiting for an answer and it's hard and it's a difficult place. I in no way want to minimize your pain that you're experiencing right now in the moment. But I do know that right now in the moment is a time when your faith can grow deeper than it ever could if all the answers would come the way you'd like. There's opportunity for faith to grow deeper.

I'm going to leave that verse up there while I show you another verse from Psalm 62 where the psalmist is making a statement of trust. Notice in the first verse he says *there is no foothold*. I just feel like I'm sinking down, there is no foothold. But listen to the second verse where the psalm is expressing his trust and his faith in the Lord. He's saying – *Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.*

There is something that happens in the delays, in the waiting time that can either cause you to be disappointed, move away from the Lord, or it can draw you deeper in your faith. I just want you to think about that because you want your faith to grow deeper and it can grow deeper right now.

I want to share with you four principles that I think we can learn from delays and how they strengthen our faith. The first one is that when we experience delays, we must learn to trust in God and not in circumstances. Well that's big. Because I find that sometimes I trust in the circumstances and when they're doing good, I feel good. And when the circumstances aren't doing good, I feel bad and...wait a minute. What am I trusting in? Am I trusting in the circumstances or am I trusting in God? If I'm trusting in God then I can do so even in the difficult challenges, even when the answers aren't there.

I'm in a small group. I really like the small group that meets on Wednesday night that I'm a part of. You guys are parts of small groups too and I'm sure you enjoy them. One of the gals in my small group, her name is Pat. And I asked this week about what strengthens your faith. Now you would be inspired by Pat because for the last two years that we've been meeting in our small group, Pat's been with us meeting and she's been very depressed. She lost her job and it's been very painful for her. We have walked with her for two years. When she answers the question what strengthens your faith, you listen to what she has to say because for two years she's been enduring pain, but every day she gets up and serves the Lord. Every day she gets up and she reads the word of God. Every week she comes to our small group. Even though she doesn't feel like it sometimes, she does the right thing. She has learned how to trust in God in the depth of her suffering, should I say.

It was just this week after two years that she got a job and she started her job on Monday. So she met with us on Wednesday. Now she has the answer that she's been wanting for a couple of years and we're seeing a different side of Pat. But for the last two years, we've watched her grow deeper in her faith and be a testimony because of the struggle that she's been facing. Of course in our small group, we are agonizing with her over the last two years, praying for her, and asking that God would do some work. Here's a woman who's learned how to trust in God, not in circumstances. I love that. And I'm sure God has changed her life forever.

Here's another thing that we can learn from delays. If we trust in circumstances, then we have a rollercoaster type of experience. Up and down. Today is good, I feel great. Tomorrow is bad, I feel bad. Or we can draw our faith into something really deep, some rock-like faith that allows us to experience an inner joy whether circumstances are good or bad. It's really powerful. If we can learn from the delays and we can learn from the timing issues and just say, "Lord, I'm going to grow in my faith and I don't want to rely on circumstances going up and down," that really does something inside of us.

Here's another thing. When we experience delays, we must trust God by doing right, even if we do not reach our goals. See, I'm a goal-oriented person. I like to get the thing done. I like to solve problems.

Pete and I had a mutual problem in our trailers, so we got our trailers together yesterday. We worked for five hours together and at the end high fives because we solved the problems. Male bonding, you know. We got the problems solved. It was great. We had a good time.

I'm a goal-oriented person. Just think. If you're a goal-oriented person, can you experience the joy? Can you experience the trust of God even if the goal isn't accomplished? Wow. That's

pushing me in my faith to be able to enjoy trust in God and do what's right even if the goal isn't accomplished. Doing what's right, that's faith. I'm just going to keep doing what's right even though I don't see the end in sight. I'm going to do the right thing. That's one of the benefits of delays. We don't like them. But they sure grow our faith deeper when that happens in our lives.

One more I'm going to put up here. We submit to God's lordship when we take advantage of present opportunities while we wait. I just think right now we have opportunities that we could use to glorify God even though we don't have the answers to our prayers the way we'd like them. Even though circumstances aren't as great as we would like, can we do what's right now?

So here's this man, this nobleman, and he's thinking, "What else can I do? I love my son so much. Oh there's Jesus down there twenty miles away. I'm going to go to Him and I'm going to talk to Him." So the nobleman goes that direction to try to do what's right. What can I do?

There's a whole part of this message that I think that God wants for us is to recognize this: Delays and not getting what we want is an opportunity for us to go deeper in our faith. Okay? That's a very important message here. I'm going to go on to another part of the sermon, but let's not miss that piece. Delays and having to wait are an opportunity to have our faith grow deeper. I think often we like our faith to go higher, and we'll talk about that in a moment because our faith can go higher. We can get inspired and excited and good things can happen. But I want you to see that your faith can go deeper and it's the waiting times that draw that. But it's going to require more than just relying on experience. You're going to want to get to know God's word. You're going to want to open it up and read it every day. You're going to learn more about who God is when we read His word, and in the midst of that, good things will happen in your faith. You'll find that bedrock instead of feeling like there's no foothold. You'll be down in the bedrock because of your relationship with the Lord.

Alright. Let's go on in the passage to the next part of the same passage. We're just continuing on. It says this: *While he was still on the way...* Now he's on his way home. Jesus had told him, "Go. Your son is living." He's *on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living.*

Okay. You get the test results and they're negative and you go, "Oh what a relief. I don't have to face the cancer right now in my life." Or "what a relief. I don't have the problem that I thought I was going to have." It's that relief that this dad is experiencing in the moment. Oh my son is alive and he's living.

So here's what he does. There's the question in his mind. Now that he's living, I've got to ask you guys a question. This is the servants coming. *When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him." Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed. This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.*

The exact time. Do you see that word *exact*? I just find that really intriguing because we all know that there are God mystery moments, don't we? Other people call them random chance. If you

believe in God and a worldview that includes the Lord and what He's doing, then you believe that God not only exists, but He created the world and then He's working with it and bringing events together and things and people together. Do you believe that? Okay that's a Christian worldview if you believe the other worldview has this idea of randomness that occasionally good things come together.

Let me ask you a question. How many of you would say that there's a time in your life where things come together. Other people might think they were random, but for you, you know that God was working. How many of you would say that? Okay. See, that's because we have this Christian worldview. We understand that God is at work and it's really interesting to watch that happen and faith producing. Wouldn't you say it's faith producing? You go yes. Because here's why. You just got a glimpse of the sovereignty of God. You just got a glimpse of God working in people's lives. That's what's really cool. Right? So this lifts your faith higher. We want a faith that goes deeper and we want a faith that goes higher.

There are a lot of examples in the Bible of these kinds of what we might call coincidences. The world calls them coincidences. I don't believe they are coincidences. In fact I've taken out of my vocabulary the word luck. I don't say, "I was lucky" or "you were lucky". I don't even say that to someone because I don't believe in luck. I believe that God is sovereign and He's orchestrating things that are going on.

One of the examples that I really enjoy in the Bible is about David. I just want you to see the detail in this story about what some might call random, but we see God at work. This is David running away from Saul. Saul is trying to kill him and he's been trying to kill him for a long time. There's one particular part of the story when David thinks he's away, but Saul is coming in and has found him. Saul is coming around the mountain. Listen to the story.

Saul was going along one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them, a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land." Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. And David was spared.

You can imagine David writing a psalm about that. I don't know if he wrote a psalm about that, but you can imagine him singing a song and saying, "God, thank you for rescuing me! I know this was the exact time that I needed this." This was not an accident. This was not a random statement.

"So Scott, this is the point in the message where you need an illustration," is what I told myself this week. I'll tell you a story about some kind of random event in my life. I've been plagued with this all week. What kind of random event could I share that would be appropriate to share with you? Because I could tell you some that would not be all that edifying for you or that are other people's business that I would share. So I'm thinking even yesterday morning and I just don't have an idea. I'll go through yesterday and see if I can come to one of these God mystery moments, and sure enough one happened that involves all of you. So I want to tell you about it.

First I want to tell you about Liz. This is my friend Liz. She's sitting here in the middle, embarrassed, probably, that I'm talking about her. But let me say just a couple things about Liz. Liz grew up in a Christian home and then after high school and so on she kind of left the faith. Now she's back here in church. So we're grateful that she's here and God is doing a work in her life. She has a mother who is a Christian who probably is going to listen to this sermon. And what do you think that mom has been doing for the last few years? Praying for her daughter. Right? Well now her daughter is living in the home of Peter and Terri Brown, Christian people. Can you imagine what her mom must think when Liz reports to her mom now she's living with Christian people. I happen to employ Liz to work for me in something. Now she's working for a pastor? Just imagine how this gets back to mom. Okay? And mom's hearing this. You're working for a pastor? Now what is mom thinking? Do you think mom is thinking, "Oh this is not just random. God is working in my daughter's life. This is so cool."

How many get my e-news in the mail? I send out an e-news in the email. Some of you don't get it. Sign up for it at the information table. Sometimes I say something interesting. I always wonder if people read those things. Yesterday I sent one out. Did you get the e-news I sent out yesterday about the person who needs dental work? That's Liz. Okay. Liz was saying her mouth hurt and I said, "Okay. Let me see if I can help you." So I've been trying to help Liz with her dental work. I sent out an e-news yesterday morning.

Within a few minutes I get a response back from someone I haven't seen for over a year. I didn't even know he was on the e-news list. And he says, "Hey Scott, maybe I can help." I thought, "Oh yeah. This guy's a dentist." I wasn't even looking for a dentist. You read the e-news. I wasn't looking for a dentist. I was looking to find a dentist appointment and I was looking for a ride to get her to this appointment. He says, "I think I could help. I would be willing to help with this." I go whoa, this is so cool. And then he says, "I'll be at church tomorrow." There he is right there! I know he's really embarrassed that I'm telling this.

But I just share that because I went away from this experience last night when they got an appointment together on Tuesday, I'm going, "This is a God moment. This is not random. God is at work in the midst of all of this stuff. And I get to see it! This is so cool!" You know what I got to see? I got to see the providence of God. I got to see the sovereignty of God at work in people's lives. That is exciting. Doesn't that do something to our faith? It lifts it higher, doesn't it? We get excited about what God wants to do. It's inspiring for us.

I want to tell you how you can see more God moments in your life. Pray more for specific things. Don't just pray for general things. Pray for specific things. Ask God for things and you'll see that God will work in the midst of that. I'm not saying that God is a genie and He'll just do whatever you want. I'm just saying develop your prayer life. Sometimes in the midst of your prayer life God will take you deeper in your heart to experience Him in a way that you've never experienced Him before. And sometimes He'll take you higher to see the providence of God and see life from His perspective.

We don't always get to see God working in our lives. He's working all the time. We don't always get to see Him. But when you get up higher sometimes you go, "Whoa! This is not random. This is real." God is at work and it's exciting to see that in our lives.

So I trust that God will strengthen your faith. Ask the question, what strengthens your faith? What builds your faith? Ask God to drive you deeper into His word and good things will happen inside of your heart.

Would you stand with me and let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, we know that each person here is here by design. People that are listening on the Facebook Live are listening by design. I would ask, Lord, that you would touch each of us in the way that we need to be touched right now. I pray that you would strengthen our faith, grow us deeper in our walk with you. Reveal to us how you're working in our world in ways that we never imagined. We ask, Lord, that you would bless us and encourage us and teach us what it means to be your children. We ask this in Jesus name, amen.