

Staring Death In The Face

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[0 : 0 0] Well if we could this morning with the Lord's help for a short while if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the Gospel according to John, John chapter 4 and if we read again at verse 46, John chapter 4 at verse 46.

It says, So he that is Jesus came again to Cain and 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 from Judea to Galilee he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son for he was at the point of death.

He was at the point of death. You know this year has been a year in which we are all being staring death in the face because we've been repeatedly reminded about the frailty and the fragility of life. We won't remember it but it was on the 5th of March this year that the first person in the United Kingdom died of Covid-19. It was a woman in her 70s from Reading and since then many, many people have fallen victim to this invisible enemy and they have been added to the coronavirus death toll and you know what's remarkable is that throughout this year death has been staring us in the face because you know every 24 hours we've been given an update on how many people have tested positive for Covid-19 and how many people have been hospitalised by Covid-19 and also how many people have died because of Covid-19. Of course at first it was a bit of a shock and a worry hearing this death toll rising but you know as the weeks and months have gone by

I don't know about you but I've sadly become accustomed to this daily briefing on the news it's just part of the news at six o'clock every every evening where we hear about the cases and casualties of Covid-19 but you know the danger is is that as time goes on with things getting gradually worse again and the restrictions increasing again you know we be the danger is that we become complacent and even casual about the coronavirus but the truth is death is still staring us in the face and our daily briefing of the cases and casualties of Covid-19 they're there to remind us all about the risk and the reality of this virus yes the cases and casualties of Covid-19 they may just be numbers on a counter or statistics on a chart but you know when we actually stop and think about it we all know that included in these numbers and statistics are names and people and lives and relatives of loved ones and you know in this life prior to

Covid-19 these numbers that we see every single day they were once parents and grandparents they were brothers and sisters they were children and grandchildren they were friends and neighbours and work colleagues some of them were frontline doctors and nurses some were NHS workers some were key workers you know they're not just numbers on a counter or statistics on a chart they were the cases and casualties of this virus they were the cases and casualties of Covid-19 and they ought to make us never forget that 2020 has been the year in which we have all as a nation been staring death in the face and you know the same was true for this royal official because you know as he looked at the bed of his dying son death was staring him in the face death was staring him in the face but you know what's remarkable is that as death stared him in the face death was the means for the meeting and the miracle with Jesus death was the means for the meeting and the miracle with Jesus and that's what I want us to think about this morning they're outheadings this morning the means the meeting and the miracle the means the meeting and the miracle so first of all the means look at verse 43 it says after the two days Jesus 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 Canaan Galilee where he had made the water wine and at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill so John the evangelist he introduces this section by informing us that after Jesus had stayed in Samaria for two days he returned to Galilee because you remember that it was when Jesus was in Samaria that a woman with a past met Jesus at a well with a past the woman of Samaria had half an hour with Jesus at Jacobs well and that half an hour with Jesus it changed her life because she became one of the first gospel missionaries and she went to her hometown and she spoke to the people of her town and she said to them come see a man who told me all the things that I ever did is not this the Christ and as we saw earlier in the chapter this missionary endeavor of the the Samaritan woman had led to a Samaritan revival with many people coming out to meet Jesus but now John tells us that after two days of being in Samaria Jesus he traveled north towards Canaan in Galilee and John he also gives us this little note that Jesus bypassed his hometown of Nazareth which was on the way to Samaria from Samaria to Galilee you had to pass through through Nazareth so Jesus went round Nazareth towards Canaan Galilee and John says the reason for this was in verse 44 for Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown but then John he goes on to remind us who this Jesus really is because he says in verse 45 so when he came to Galilee the Galileans welcomed him having seen all that he had done in

[6 : 49] Jerusalem at the feast for they too had gone to the feast so he came again to Canaan in Galilee where he had made the water wine and at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill so John says that the Galileans they welcomed Jesus because they witnessed what Jesus did at the pass over and they watched what Jesus did at the wedding because if you remember back in chapter 2 it was at the feast of the Passover in Jerusalem that Jesus was cleaning church Jesus cleansed the temple by chasing out the merchants and the money changers and then the Galileans that they welcomed Jesus because they had witnessed what Jesus did at the Passover but they also welcomed Jesus because they watched what Jesus did at the wedding in Canaan of Galilee because you remember it was at the wedding in Canaan of Galilee that Jesus revealed his identity as the bridegroom of the church when he turned water into wine but of course by now it's a year later the happy couple at the wedding in

Canaan of Galilee they've been married for a year they've celebrated their first anniversary and here is Jesus he's returning to Canaan but what John is doing here by saying that the Galileans welcomed Jesus because they are witnessed what he did at the Passover and watched what he did at the wedding John is reminding us he's reminding us once again who this Jesus really is because you remember that's why John wrote his gospel John wrote his gospel in order to make sure that we get the identity of Jesus right because if we get the identity of Jesus wrong we'll misunderstand the gospel and we'll fail to see that Jesus is the only way of salvation and one which and one way in which John ensures that we get the identity of Jesus right is by drawing our attention to seven signs and seven sayings throughout his gospel we'll see this time and time again as we go through the gospel of John

John recorded seven signs which Jesus performed and seven sayings which Jesus pronounced and John uses these seven signs and seven sayings in order to reveal and represent the identity of Jesus as the eternal Son of God John used these seven signs and seven sayings in order to remind and reaffirm to us that Jesus is the sinless Savior and sacrifice of sinner Jesus is the sinless Savior and sacrifice for sinners and so when Jesus came to Canaan in Galilee he he was returning there the first time he came to Canaan Galilee was when he did his first sign when he turned water into wine and now as Jesus returns to Canaan of Galilee he performs a second sign he resurrects the Son of the King's official where we're told in verse 54 we're told there that this was the second sign that Jesus performed but you know as we said earlier as this royal official looked at the bend of his dying son he was death was staring him in the face but you know it was as death stared him in the face that death was the means to bring him to Jesus because you know for this royal official the truth is were it not for the helpless situation that he found himself in he would never have come to Jesus as a royal official he was a servant of King Herod not the same King Herod who tried to kill Jesus as a baby that was Herod the Great this was Herod

Antipas his son and Herod Antipas was the Herod who beheaded John the Baptist he was the Herod who allied himself with Pilate at the crucifixion of Jesus and that was the company that this royal official kept it was a company against the Christ it was a company against the Christ and they were against the Christ not only because of his message and his miracles but also because the people wanted to make Jesus King instead of Herod Antipas and so this royal official was in a company against the Christ but more than that he was not only a man under authority he was also a man with authority because in many ways you could say that this royal official he was like a prime minister he was a Jewish governor he was a direct servant of the King therefore his this royal official he was a man with position he was a man with power he was a man with prosperity he was a man with prestige he was a man who had riches he had reason he had reputation he had respect he was a man who thought that he had authority over his own life and also authority over the lives of others but you know when his son became ill and when his son lay dying at the point of death when he was staring death in the face this royal official came to discover that his position his power his prosperity and his prestige it was all pointless and he as death stared him in the face he saw that his riches his reason his reputation and his respect it was now rubbish they were of no use to him as he was challenged and confronted by the reality of death and no doubt as a Jew this royal official would have tried to see if his religion would help his dying son more so he would have tried using his riches to help his dying son he would have paid for every physician I'm sure to prescribe every drug in order to deal with his son's illness and out of love and desperation for his beloved son the royal official he would have spent all that he had in an attempt to make his son better but it was only making him worse and you know fearful about his son's future this royal official he came to realize that there are things in life that religion can't prevent and there are things in life that riches can't buy there are things in life that riches can't buy and religion can't prevent and you know my friends so many people today so many people today still think that the problems in our lives can either be solved by having by having enough religion or by having enough riches but the truth is there are some problems that religion can't go near and there are some problems that riches can't even touch and that's because the sins sicknesses sufferings and sorrows of this life they are too big for religion and riches to deal with but they're not too big for Jesus they're not too big for Jesus because what we see in the life of this father who was bound up in the care and compassion of his own son what we see is that his son's illness was the means of bringing him to Jesus his son's illness was the means of bringing this man to Jesus because had it not been for all these circumstances we have to question whether we have whether he would have come to Jesus at all had the royal official son not laid dying in his family home would he have ever come out to meet

Jesus would the king's governor have ever left his company against the Christ and put his royal position in jeopardy if his son was well would this man have ever come to Jesus and thrown himself down at the feet of Jesus crying as a father bound up in the interests of his own son would he have ever come begging him begging Jesus to come to his house and heal his son I don't think so I don't think he would have ever come near Jesus if it wasn't for his son being ill but you know when he was emptied of his own resources and emptied of his own efforts and emptied off the authority over his own life and the life of his own son and hitting absolute rock bottom this man came to Jesus he came to Jesus my friend at the moment of his extremity he came to the only one who could help him he realized that his need had become so great and that to whom else could he go but to Jesus his son's illness my friend it was the means of bringing this man to Jesus and you know my friend maybe when you look at the situations of sin sickness suffering or sorrow in your life maybe you can say that that was the means yes that was the means of bringing me to Jesus because had the Lord not brought these things into your life had the Lord not brought that sin or sickness or suffering or sorrow into your life maybe you would say to yourself well I would never have cried to the Lord for help

[16 : 39] I would never have opened the Bible for answers I would never have come to church but the Lord brought these things into your life and this was your path and these were your tears and this was your circumstances which he appointed for you in order to bring you to himself they were the means of bringing you to Jesus you know my friends sometimes the situations of sin sickness suffering and sorrow they are the means of bringing us to Jesus they are the means of bringing us to Jesus you know it was my good friend JC Weil I can never get away from quoting him he said affliction is one of God's medicines by it he often teaches lessons which would be learned in no other way by it he often draws souls away from sin and the world which would otherwise have perished health is a great blessing he says but sanctified disease is greater prosperity and worldly comfort are what all naturally desire but losses and crosses are far better for us if they lead us to Christ my friends sometimes the situations of sin sickness suffering or sorrow they are the means of bringing us to Jesus and that's what we see here as because as death stared this royal official in the face death was the means for the meeting with Jesus and that's what we see secondly we see the meeting the means and the meeting the meeting look at march 47 it says when this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son for he was at the point of death so Jesus said to him unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe the official said to him sar come down before my child dies so when this royal official realized that King Herod could do nothing for his dying son he came to King Jesus and what's remarkable is that the royal official he left the bedside of his dying son not sure that he would ever see him alive again and he travels 15 miles from

Capernaum to Cana and he goes to where Jesus is you know his desperation and his determination was such that he left everything to find Jesus he left everything to find Jesus and you know my friend I look at this man and all I see is a father who thought he was in control of his family his finances and his fitness and yet in a moment this father became became aware that he was staring death in the face and as a father you know he would have done anything to make his son better as a father he would have moved land and sea to spare his son's life as a father he would have traveled to the ends of the earth to find a remedy to his son's ruin as a father he would have even have preferred to die himself than for it to happen to his own son and yet as a father he was made to realize that it's only Christ who can deal with this crisis it's only Christ who can deal with this crisis and you know sometimes that's the way it is my friend it's only Christ who can deal with the crisis you know we can sometimes think that we're self-made and self-confident and self-controlled we can think that we're in control of our family and our finances and our fitness and yet in a moment in a moment things can change to the point that we're staring death in the face and we're made to realize how helpless we are and you know the thing is about this passage the royal official son he wasn't old he was young he wasn't poor he was rich and yet death was no respecter of family finance or fitness in fact one commentator that I read he solemnly wrote he wrote the first grave that was ever dug on this earth was that of a young man the first person who ever died was not a father but a son and you know my friend when we're left staring death in the face you know we feel absolutely crippled and we're brought to the end of ourselves realizing that we're in control of nothing and that without Jesus we have nothing but you know like this father we want to do the best for our children don't we we want to spare them from the sins and sicknesses and sufferings and sorrows of this life and we would rather for anything anything to have that we would rather for anything to happen to us than for it to happen to them but you know my friends sometimes it takes the sins sicknesses sufferings and sorrows of our children to bring them to christ and sometimes the lord uses the sins sicknesses sufferings and sorrows of our children to bring us to christ and that's what we see here because as this royal official stood staring death in the face his son's sickness it brought him to his knees somewhere he wouldn't have gone otherwise and yet it brought him to his knees and by that point he didn't care about his riches or his reason or his reputation or his respect all he cared about was about his dying son and how his dying son needed Jesus and you know as you read this you can feel the care and the compassion of this father because we're told that when he finds

Jesus he runs up to Jesus he's traveled all this distance and he he falls in his knees before Jesus and he just begs Jesus he begs him for help you know the ESV it says that the royal official asked Jesus for help but it's much stronger than that it's he begged Jesus for help he begged him more than that he repeatedly begged Jesus for help the royal official did as Jesus taught in the sermon on the mount ask and it will be given seek and you will find knock and it shall be open to you for everyone who asks receives the one who seeks finds and the one who knocks it will be opened and you know as a father this man on his knees before Jesus he was interceding on behalf of his son he was pleading for the life of his son and you know my friend if you're a parent or a grand parent or even if you're pregnant then you and I have been reminded that we have a great responsibility to intercede on behalf of our children and grandchildren you know that's what this passage reminds me we have a responsibility to come like this royal official pleading and praying that Jesus will save our children and our grandchildren because the truth is the world wants them the devil wants them and we have a responsibility to teach and to train our children not only about life but we also have a responsibility to teach and train our children about the Lord in fact that's what many of us have vowed in our baptism haven't we we promised that we would endeavor to instruct our children and intercede for our children we promised that we would teach and train our children to look and to listen and to love and to live for Jesus we promised to teach and to train them to follow the Lord do you know there's a brilliant book that I would encourage all parents to read it's a book called parenting by God's promises by Joel Beaky parenting by God's promises and it's by Joel Beaky and just to give you a tiny snippet of what Joel Beaky writes he writes the act of baptism confirms God's promises to our children and places them under obligation to seek his kingdom and the salvation offered to them in Christ growing up in the community of the church they are nurtured by the prayers of believers and by the preaching and teaching of God's word included including its rich invitations and solemn warnings their parents are bound to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord the congregation to which they belong is also responsible for their evangelization and instruction our children say speaking are our most cherished mission field therefore we must pray for God to do for them what we cannot do we must pray to the Lord we must intercede on their behalf pleading that the Lord would spare them and save them my friend we have a responsibility to come like this royal official pleading and praying that Jesus will save our children but you're all listen how to how Jesus responds in verse 48 we're told that Jesus said to him unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe but you know what's interesting about Jesus response is that Jesus didn't say this to the royal official because when he says unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe the

you is plural it's not singular the you is plural meaning that Jesus is addressing all the Galileans and he's rebuking them because it seems that as Jesus his ministry progressed they were becoming more obsessed with the sensational and the spectacular rather than the silent and the simple they were they had seen water being turned into wine these Galileans and now they were they were looking for more signs and wonders as evidence for believing in Jesus Christ for salvation but as Jesus said on another occasion an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign but no sign shall be given my friend if you want a sign in order to to prove that God exists or that Jesus is real or that the Bible is true Jesus says to you no sign shall be given because you know the miracle of salvation what Jesus is saying here is that the miracle of salvation is not about the sensational sensational and the spectacular it's about the silent and the simple faith in Jesus Christ the miracle of salvation is not about the sensational and the spectacular it's about silent and simple faith in Jesus Christ it's not about seeing signs and wonders as evidence and proof to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation it's about silently and simply taking Jesus at his word and that's what we see lastly the miracle the miracle the means the meeting and the miracle the miracle look at verse 49 the official sent to Jesus sir or lord 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 we 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 that was the hour when Jesus had said to him your son will live and if and he himself believed and all his household this was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee you know I don't know if you saw in this past week I don't know if you saw in the news that NASA they made what they call a historic landing on an asteroid in space nearly 200 million miles away where there was this robot robotic spacecraft that traveled through space for three years and landed on an asteroid 200 million miles away and it landed only for a few seconds in order to collect some rocks and dirt before blasting off again and returning to earth and it'll be back here in 2023 but you know you have to ask the question well why did they do it why all the energy and the energy and the effort and the expense and the answer they were giving was that they want to try and prove how life on earth began they want to find out the origin of life and you know as I watch these astronauts celebrating it just picking up some dirt of an asteroid 200 million miles away you know I felt sorry for them because the answer to their questions it wasn't to be found 200 million miles away on an asteroid the answer to their questions it doesn't require energy effort or even expense because the answer to their questions can be found by opening the bible the answer to their questions can be found in the word of god where is the origin of life

genesis 1 verse 1 in the beginning god created the heavens and the earth and you know in many ways these scientists and astronauts they're just like these Galileans here in john 4 because these Galileans they're looking for signs and wonders as evidence and proof to believe in jesus christ for salvation and yet the bible teaches us and this passage is reminding us that the miracle of salvation is not about the sensational it's not about the spectacular it's just about the silent and simple faith in jesus christ the miracle of salvation is not about the sensational and spectacular it's about silent and simple faith in jesus christ and that's what we can see in the life of this father who was concerned about his dying son he had been staring death in the face but when jesus gave the order jesus gave the order go your son will live and when jesus gave that order this royal official took jesus at his word he silently and simply believed that what jesus said was true and you know my friend that's all that's required of you in order to be saved you don't need to see signs you don't need to witness wonders you don't need to experience the sensational you don't need to have this spectacular conversion all you need is silent and simple faith in jesus christ all you need is silent and simple faith in jesus christ all you need my friend is to come to jesus where you are right here right now and ask him to have mercy upon you ask him to forgive you to cleanse you to make you his and live according to that confession that's all you need all you need is silent and simple faith in jesus christ but you know and with this i'll close you know what i love about this royal official we don't really know much about him but what i love about this man is that when this father took jesus at his word when he committed his life to jesus christ it had an impact upon his whole family this father's faith impacted his family this father's faith impacted his family because we're told that his son not only believed his son not only believed but he himself believed and his household he himself believed and his household the father's faith impacted his family and you know my unconverted friend you think about the impact that your commitment to jesus christ will have upon your home and your family you think about the impact that that will have upon them of course it doesn't mean that you'll be free from sin, sickness, suffering or sorrow but it does mean that with death staring us all in the face through your experience and your example your family will witness what will they witness they will witness the miracle of salvation and it's to be found not in the spectacular or the sensational but in the silent and simple faith in jesus christ my friend i'd encourage you this morning to commit your life to jesus christ not seeking signs of wonder but to come silently and simply committing your life to jesus by faith

[34 : 58] my friend don't put it off any longer because death is staring us in the face death is reminding us that life is uncertain death is sure sin is the cause christ is the cure you come to this jesus silently and simply by faith in him and him alone let me the lord bless these thoughts to us and let us play together oh lord our gracious god we give thanks to thee for the wonder of the gospel a gospel that reminds us that we don't need the spectacular or the sensational all we need is silent and simple faith in jesus christ help us lord we pray to come to come to this jesus to come to him with our sins our sicknesses our sufferings and our sorrows to come to him knowing that he is the one we need to come to he is the one who is able to meet us at our point of need he is the one who is able to encourage us and to strengthen us and to bless us and lord remember us then we pray remember lord those in our homes and in our families those who are struggling those who are sick those who are suffering the lord we pray particularly this morning for those who are lost those who who need jesus all the dourist bring them the dourist use means in order to bring them to jesus that they would come on bended knee falling before this wonderful savior acknowledging that he is lord to the glory of god the family lead us and guide us this day and keep us for jesus sake amen well we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing to god's praise in sam 103 sam 103 that we're singing in the sing sam's version and we're singing from the beginning and we're singing down to the verse mark 11 sam 103 and we're singing from the beginning this is a sam that reminds us that our god is a gracious god and he's one who heals our diseases he's one who forgives our sins he's one who helps us in our distances he's one who's able to take our sins away from us as far as east is distant from the west he's our gracious god and sam 103 it encourages us and exhorts us to praise god my soul with all my heart that may exalt his holy name for getting out all his benefits his praise my soul and song proclaim the lord forgives you all your sins and heals your sickness and distress your life he rescues from the grave and crowns you in his tenderness sam 103 to god's praise you all your sins and heals your sickness and distress your life he rescues from the grave and crowns you in his tenderness and crowns you in his tenderness sam and

And draw the bonds, the bonds that he made on his ways. There's mighty deeps to his well-sum.

There's mighty deeps to his well-sum. For his mercy, full and kind, To anger, small and full of grace, He will not constant living through, For in his anger, height his face.

He does not buy his charnices, Our deliverings, their just reward, And raises above us high as hand, To arch all those who fear the Lord.

To arch all those who fear the Lord.