

# The Saviour of All Who Believe

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 13 April 2025

Preacher: Niels van de Kastele

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Yeah, if you don't know me, my name is Niels, part of the staff team here. It's really great to be with you. I haven't been in the afternoon service for a few weeks. So good to see many. And yeah, let's look at this passage together.

Why don't we pray before we do that? Father, thank you that you are the living, loving, speaking God. And you speak to each of our hearts. Pray that this passage would come alive.

And you'd help us to respond. That your word wouldn't just go in and out again, but it would take deep roots in our hearts. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Now, before Hong Kong, about nine years ago, yeah, I came here.

I used to be in the UK, work for a church there. And at the church we had a missionary reaching out to Muslims. And she had a team with some people who kind of would help.

And I was part of that. And I always thought, well, we're going to see such a great response. Right? I mean, why not? I mean, think about Muslims.

[ 1 : 0 0 ]     They believe in that creator God. Right? They believe in a holy book. They believe in right and wrong. They believe that there's judgment for those who haven't been good enough. So many things that we share, right, as Christians with them.

Except, of course, that they don't know the good news. Right? They, I'm sure they know that, you know, we can never be good enough by ourselves. We will not stand on the day of judgment.

But Jesus came and he died for us so that we could be free and forgiven. Right? Grace, wonderful news. So surely they would all jump at that. That's what we thought. Of course, as you probably know, they didn't.

Right? Muslims, it's very hard for them to come to Jesus for some reason. It's a very hard ministry. Very little fruit. And I'm just amazed that this lady for like 20 years has been kept going in her outreach.

Not just Muslims. Maybe you were here last week. We had this seminar on the resurrection. And one of the things we discussed, how about the Jewish people? Right? That's even more. They don't just have a holy book.

[ 2 : 0 6 ]     They have the holy book. They have the Old Testament. Right? They believe in the true God. They are waiting for the Messiah. And you want to talk to them about Jesus. And yet, in the world, there's not many Jewish people who believe.

And we talked about it last week. That seems so strange. Right? Why do some people not believe who you really expect to? Or sometimes the other way around.

You know, there's other people you wouldn't expect. And they do. But it can seem so messy. And people, you know, why do people ask these questions? Because it sometimes makes you doubt. Right? You know, if the people who knew the Old Testament so well, if they don't believe in Jesus, is he really the Messiah?

Is he really the Christ that we want to follow? Is he really so powerful if so many people don't respond? Right? We want to follow Jesus, I guess, if you're a Christian. And we want to do that confidently.

Maybe you're here. You're not a Christian. You're wondering about Jesus. And this is one of those things. Well, this is really true. If, you know, there is sometimes so little response. So that's why it's great to look at today's passage.

[ 3 : 10 ] As Kevin said, it's the last in this series. And it does feel a little bit like a wrap-up as well. I don't know if you heard the reading. If you've been with us for a few weeks, maybe you heard all the referrals to earlier in the book.

So like in verse 46. So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. Maybe you remember that. Famous miracle, right? Water into wine.

It's great for your wedding. And verse 54. This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee. And the water into wine was the first sign.

Right? The first sign. The second sign. Even though we know from the text that he did lots of signs in between. No, it's like this is how John did brackets. Right?

Back then when they wrote, they didn't put chapter 1, chapter 2. They used these kind of brackets. Right? Hey, there was this sign in Cana and this another sign in Cana. So it's like a bit of a pause.

[ 4 : 10 ] Where we're stopping this section. That's why we're finishing now before Easter. Chapter 5 to 10 is the same thing. It's bracketed. 11 to 20. So it's a time to look back. And a time to look forward.

And if you look back at those last few chapters, in a way, I hope you were here and it's been so encouraging. Right? Because, well, the Messiah is here. God's promised King.

God's promised Savior. He arrived. We saw how he came to save. To bring the new creation that God promised. The new beginning. He came to purify.

And then, you know, there was chapter 2. And then chapter 3 and 4, we had these two characters. These very opposite characters. Right? You remember Nicodemus. And then last week, the Samaritan woman. And they were total opposites.

Right? There was a man and a woman. And one was educated. And the other was uneducated. And one was morally upright. And the other had a shameful past. And, you know, one was a religious teacher.

[ 5 : 08 ] You know, he knew all the right things. And the other was a Samaritan, which was kind of a religious half-preet. Really messed up spirituality. Right? With some of the truth and some paganism.

But the idea is, no, we have these two extreme people. And all of us will be somewhere in between. Right? All of us will be somewhere on the spectrum. And John includes them both to say, hey, you are invited.

Whoever you are, Jesus is for you. The king is here. And he's for everyone. Right? That's wonderful. Right? That Jesus, you know, he offers grace. We don't have to come in by how good we are.

He invites us. And we can come and be rescued. We can come and receive abundant life. We can be fully satisfied in him. But that's his invitation.

Inviting is one thing. Right? People need to respond. But, right, if they're in chapter 4, people really do respond. And last week, there wasn't time to cover the whole chapter.

[ 6 : 05 ] That's why we read the last bit again today. Jesus reached out to this Samaritan woman. She was an outcast because of her past. But she really changed. And she started to tell everyone in the town where she was from about Jesus.

And there was a great response. Right? Verse 39. Many Samaritans from the town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. And it is so encouraging.

And these people, they had some history with God. But right now, their religion was messed up. But they believed. Verse 42. We know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.

Right? What a happy story. The king is here. And everyone's invited. And people are responding. It's all so good. It's all as it should be. Well, actually, is it.

Because as we then read on, as Jesus leaves Samaria, we see, well, surprising belief. And in a way, maybe surprising unbelief. And because verse 43.

[ 7 : 0 6 ] After the two days, he departed for Galilee. That's okay, right? Jesus travels around. But in verse 44. I don't know what you thought. It's such a weird comment.

For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown. Kind of, you know, Jesus is not going to get much response in his hometown.

And why does John mention that? And what is he talking about? I mean, his hometown? Is that Nazareth where he grew up? Well, that's in Galilee. Is he now going to his hometown?

And in some way, I think he is. I think the kind of contrast between with his hometown, his kind of his, you know, father land, father thing. It's between Samaria and Judea.

He was just now in Samaria, right? The other place. But now he is back home in Judea with the Jews. He's a Jew. Jewish rabbi here is with the Jews.

[ 8 : 0 1 ] Because he seems to not think well of the Galileans, right? Because he's there. And that this official comes to him in Cana.

And then how does he respond when this official comes? Verse 48. So Jesus said to him, unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. And the U there, it has a footnote.

It's always good to read the footnotes. And the footnote says the U here is plural. And so Jesus isn't saying to the official. He says to the people there, hey, you guys don't believe without a miracle, right?

Unless you see a miracle, you will not believe. Which is not a very good thing. It kind of colors this passage, right? Because like verse 45. So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him.

Oh, that's great. They welcomed him. Well, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. Yeah, they saw his miracles. And so they welcomed him because they wanted miracles.

[ 9 : 0 3 ] Is that a good thing? I mean, John has been talking about that before, right? In chapter 2, for example, it's on the screen. Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.

Same thing. But Jesus, on his part, did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people. John, he and Jesus, they don't think well of signs just, yeah, on the faith, just based on miracles, just focused on miracles.

I mean, it's very different from the Samaritans. Right? How did the Samaritans believe? Verse 39. Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony.

Right? They listened to what she said. Verse 41. And many more believed because of his words. Right? They were focused on the words. And that's in a way, you know, it's not just back then.

That's what John wants. Right? What did John say? And now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is a Christ.

[ 10 : 10 ] So, John wants you to believe based on his book, based on his words. Jesus did miracles, but back then. And they are now written down, and we can believe because of the words. After all, Jesus isn't here.

I think that's interesting. You often meet, maybe that's something that you think, right? If I want to believe, well, I first need to see a miracle. I mean, miracles is a huge thing, right? For God to come and intervene in the world like a real amazing miracle.

God, you know, God did amazing things, but his way of working as he did it back then. And people saw it, and they wrote it down, and it's here. It can be quite a claim to say, hey, Jesus, I want a miracle.

Especially sometimes those miracles, well, can you do this particular miracle? Can you give me this job? Or can you give me a baby? Or, right, it's sometimes it is about what we want.

That's maybe what these people want, right? They wanted something. They wanted this and that, and that's why they were interested in Jesus. But Jesus doesn't work like that. What did Jesus come to do? He came to save us.

[ 11 : 18 ] He didn't come as a genie to just give us whatever we want. I mean, he came to give us what we deep down really want. What we don't even know that we want because we've just forgotten what it's like to be back with God.

But, yeah, he came to give us what we need, what we deep down want, not what we think we want. So he invites us to come and trust him, to trust his word, to trust his plans without our agenda.

But I think the real surprise is who has the real faith here, right? We have the Jews and the Samaritans. We have the people with the truth and the religious half-breeds.

Well, God's chosen people don't believe. They just go after the miracles. While the Samaritans, they believe, right? They get it right.

And that's kind of surprising, right? It's not what we would expect. We would expect that the Samaritans missed him and the Jews, they all understood it. And it's a bit like in chapter 1. It's so surprising, right?

[ 12 : 20 ] He came to his own and his own people did not receive him. How could his own people, right? The people that he chose and made and led out of Egypt, they didn't believe him.

It makes you realize we never even read about Nicodemus, right? Do you remember Nicodemus? When I've been with the Samaritan woman, we see her response. Nicodemus is actually not even mentioned. It doesn't actually say that he believed or that he fell on his knees or that he went away.

We don't even know. It's like it's in the air, right? Well, that's the thing we should see, right? Jesus invites everyone, but not everyone responds.

And sometimes the people who respond are very surprising. And the people who don't respond are very surprising. But, yeah, so that's maybe it. And chapters 5 to 10, it's going to get even worse as we see people respond to Jesus in a not very good way.

But what should we do with that? Okay, so this is what John wants to highlight. Now, my heading is a bit funny, but actually what Jesus wants is that we are not surprised.

[ 13 : 28 ] Now, why would we be surprised? It's only if we read John's gospel in isolation and we don't look around us. But actually for the readers, they knew what was going on.

And that means actually this is not surprising. Because they were probably, they had a Jewish background because John assumes a lot of Old Testament. But they knew that actually most Jews don't believe.

And they probably wondered, why? How can Jesus really be the Christ if so few people, so few of us believe it? Why do the Gentiles and the Samaritans respond well, but we don't?

Well, John is saying that's not new. That's not surprising. That was back then when Jesus was here as well. And as you go through the gospel, it gets worse.

It is not surprising. It is actually, it's confirming what we see. It may be surprising. It may be weird. And we may need to think why. And that's why we have a few more chapters.

[ 14 : 29 ] But in a way, it shouldn't be surprising. Even today, right? Sometimes we see that in the world. And it's unsurprising. I mean, where is the gospel really going out? In places like South America or Africa.

Loads of people believing. And then, I mean, I'm from Western Europe, right? Western Europe. Actually, the church is declining. It's very hard work. But that's so weird, right? Because, you know, people in Western Europe, they're much richer, right?

The church has much more resources. And people are more educated. And Europe has such a big Christian background. Unlike in Africa, where people are, you know, more poor and suffering.

And lots of spiritual and animism. And yet, they believe there. But not in Europe. It's weird, right? Actually. You'd think in Europe, you'd see much more response. And yet, we don't.

It's really surprising. But John is saying, no, no, that happens. You know? It's nothing wrong with the gospel. Nothing wrong with Jesus. Nothing wrong with his invitation.

[ 15 : 30 ] Nothing wrong with his power to save. But a lot of people just don't respond, right? And that doesn't change anything. And John knows, you know, this can be a struggle. Maybe, especially depending on where you're from, you wonder, you know, hey, how can I trust Jesus if things go like that?

And John is saying, hey, I know that. And I want to reassure you, what you're seeing is exactly what God's word says. It's exactly as expected.

It was already in Jesus' day. It's still there. And you can trust Jesus. He really is the Messiah. He really is the Savior of the world. Just, there are people who don't see that.

It's exactly as expected. Although, at the same time, it can sound a bit negative, right? He's so negative about the Jews. And yet, at the same time, this passage, it's not hopeless at all.

I mean, back in chapter 1, right? He came to his own and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name. He gave the right to become children of God.

[ 16 : 38 ] And we get, in the midst of that unbelief, we get a focus on one guy, one individual, an official. And actually, here, the message is, well, at the same time, anyone can believe.

Anyone can believe. So will you. Right? Because this official, he turns out to have true faith. And despite his background. Now, I say that because many of us, when we hear this passage, we think of another passage in the Gospels.

And we think it's basically the same passage, right? Maybe you know about the centurion in Matthew 8 and in Luke 7. And that's, yeah, that's a famous.

So the stories are very similar. Because there's this unnamed official. We just know his kind of job. Right? He comes to Jesus. And Jesus heals at a distance. And it's a story about faith.

And so we all think it's the same as this one. Actually, it's not. It's the opposite. Because look at the differences. So one is a centurion who works for the Romans. This is a royal official who works for Herod.

[ 17 : 41 ] You can see it from the Greek words. And so the centurion is a Gentile. But this guy is a Jew. Right? So that's different. Of course, in one case, it's a servant who is dying. This is the son who is dying.

But I think this is the big difference. With the centurion, Jesus wants to come to his house. And the centurion says, oh, no need. You can do it at a distance. Actually, here in this story, the official wants Jesus to come to his house.

But Jesus says no. And Jesus does it at a distance. Right? You can see the difference. It's really not the same story. But at the same time, yeah, it is about real faith.

Because this is the thing. By this official, you can understand his desperate situation. I mean, you can't fault him. That he hears about Jesus, this guy who can heal. And his son is at a point of death.

So he travels all the way from Capernaum. I think it's about 40 kilometers. Comes to Cana. And comes to Jesus. Sir, please come down. He wants his son to be saved.

[ 18 : 43 ] And Jesus, he seems a bit reluctant. And you guys don't believe without miracles. But, of course, the man doesn't give up. Sir, come down before my child dies.

Now, of course, we know Jesus then heals him. Right? And that's amazing. Right? He heals from 40 kilometers away. You know, I don't know if you ever see movies and people have healing powers.

That's not on 40 kilometers away. Right? I love that here in Hong Kong. You don't need to go to A&E.; You can just stay at home and you can get healed while you're at home. Right? If the doctors could do that. But, of course, they can't because no one can do what Jesus does here.

It's incredible what he can do. He has to judge authority. He just says it. And 40 kilometers away, it happens. But what is the thing about this miracle? It requires faith.

Right? Believe. He says, okay, you will only believe when you see signs. Yeah? You don't have true faith like the Samaritans. What kind of miracle does he do? A miracle that you don't see.

[ 19 : 45 ] Right? The man doesn't see it. Right? Because he just says, okay, go, your son will live. And the man doesn't know. Right? He has no idea. He doesn't see his son because his son is 40 kilometers away and he can't just video call him or whatever.

He just has to trust in Jesus' words. Right? Just like a test. But he passes it. Verse 49. The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.

He would never see Jesus again. He has no other chance. But he trusts Jesus' words. And he goes. And he does some errands. And the next day he comes and meets his servants.

And his servants say, yeah, your son is recovering. And when exactly? Well, exactly then when Jesus said it. Amazing. And so, yeah, I mean, that helps his faith, of course.

Right? End of verse 53. And he himself believed in all his household. It's like, of course, it will boost your faith. But it's not that he didn't have faith before. He trusted God's word already.

[ 20 : 48 ] And then, of course, he saw this happen. But that's the encouraging story. Right? And this guy sticks out. He is there in Galilee. Right? He is there among the people whose faith is not really what Jesus said.

But he has real faith. And that's such an encouragement. And so, the message is, you can believe. You can respond. Even if there's not many people like you.

Even if no one around you believes. Right? You can believe. It doesn't matter. Maybe you're here and you kind of want to believe. But, I mean, none of my family believes.

It doesn't matter. Right? Jesus invites you. None of my friends believe. It doesn't matter. Maybe, you know, Jesus is not for my kind of people. It's for that kind of people. But not for people like me.

No. Jesus is for everyone. Whoever you are, you are welcome. Right? You know, this morning we had a domestic helper, the Appreciation Day.

[ 21 : 49 ] We had all these helpers. For me, for them, it's very easy to think, oh yeah, my employer goes to church. And I come to church and there's all these people like my employer. I don't belong. Nonsense. Right? Jesus is for everyone.

And all of them, you know, you can believe. And again, if you're here and you're not yet a Christian, you can believe. Jesus invites you. How can he do that? Well, as we thought about earlier, Jesus died on the cross.

Right? I mean, if we had to come to Jesus with our education and our work and our performance, maybe some people have it easier than others. But the wonderful thing about Jesus is the gospel.

That he died. That he paid for everything we've done wrong. That he did everything right and gives that to us. And so it doesn't matter who we are. The only thing we just need to do is let go of our own things and trust him.

And that's why we're all welcome. But yeah, will you believe? Is there anything stopping you? Is there anything holding you back if you want to believe? You know, any fear, any worry, any objection or question, please talk about it.

[ 22 : 54 ] We'd love to help you. But don't think Jesus is not for you. Everyone is welcome. Anyone can believe. And it's not just...

And it's also if you're a Christian, right? And you have already come to Jesus. You know, I think I find this passage so encouraging. Right? Because we each try to share the gospel.

And sometimes it's discouraging. And some people can seem so far from Jesus. And, you know, will they ever respond? I hope this passage tells you, you know, this official is proof.

Anyone can believe, right? From whatever people group, from whatever background. People can believe. I mean, thinking about Western Europe, I think of myself, right?

Again, Western Europe is not doing great spiritually. Very post-Christian, secular. And that was me. I mean, I became a Christian at age 25. I used to be an atheist, right? And I didn't look for Christians.

[ 23 : 54 ] I didn't know any Christians growing up. I met a few at university who were just weird. And I never heard of anyone becoming a Christian. There's just a few superstitious, crazy people around there.

And yet, God saved me. Right? He had such mercy. Even though I wasn't looking for anything, and yet he saved me. Despite everything I was, everything I'd done.

And so if he can save me, he can save anyone. He can save Western Europeans. Because I'm evidence that he did. And so that's great. I can reach out. You know, I know hardline Muslims who have come to faith.

You can reach out to Muslims, other minorities here in Hong Kong. Maybe in your office. There's no other Christian. Actually, anyone can believe. You see that here. You can reach out with the gospel.

Now, we don't know who will believe. But anyone can believe. And I find it encouraging and hopeful. And, yeah. And, again, such a wonderful grace, right?

[ 24 : 56 ] That Jesus just invites everyone. And anyone who comes to him can have eternal life. So, yeah. Let's respond. Let's pray.

I mean, there's discussion. I'll pray. But then let's discuss this together. And let's encourage each other. And let's help each other. Right? To keep trusting Jesus. To keep believing. Because anyone is welcome with him.

Why don't we pray? Our Father, thank you. That's, yeah.

The gospel is so wonderful. It's for everyone. No matter who we are. Man or woman. No matter what background or ethnicity or job.

No matter how upright or shameful our past. Everyone is welcome. Because Jesus did it all on the cross. Lord, help us respond. Help us to trust.

[ 25 : 52 ] If we are already with Jesus. But if some of us, we need to take that step. Would we take that step today? To come to Jesus. And then start trusting him. Start following him. Because we know he welcomes us.

We know he wants us. Because he wants everyone. Lord, help us. Yeah. To believe and to keep believing. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.