

**Sunday; May 15, 2022**

# **Evidence that Demands a Response**

**(The You-The-Readers Meeting)  
(Series: "From Meetings to Mission")  
(Message Four)  
(John 20:30-31)**

## **Scripture:**

*<sup>30</sup>Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup>But these are written that you may believe<sup>[a]</sup> that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)*

## **Message:**

**Luke learns at a different pace than most elementary school students. But Luke has a winsome smile and a pure heart that endears him to everyone who knows him.**

When the pastor of his church formed a basketball team, Luke signed up. While the other boys practiced dribbling and layups, Luke threw the ball at the basket from the free throw line. It rarely went in, but when it did, Luke raised his arms and shouted, "Look at me, Coach! Look at me!" The coach would look at him and smile.

The team didn't fare too well that year. They won only once – when a snowstorm kept the other team from showing up. In the final game of the year, they played the best team in the league. It was over as soon as it began. By the fourth quarter, Luke's team was over thirty points behind. One of the team members called time-out: "Coach, this is our last game, and Luke has never made a basket. We should let him into the game."

The team agreed. The coach sent him in and instructed him to go to the free throw line and wait. Luke was ecstatic. He stood on his spot. When the ball was passed to him, he shot and missed. A player for the other team grabbed the rebound and dribbled down the court for an easy layup. Luke was passed the ball again; he shot and missed again. Again, the other team scored off the rebound.

Gradually the other team began to figure out what was going on. They began throwing the ball to Luke. He kept missing, but the players from both teams kept throwing it to him. Soon everyone in the gym was pulling for Luke to make a basket.

The coach figured the game had to be over and glance at the clock. It was stopped at 4.3 seconds. The scorekeepers were in on it, shouting with the crowd, "Luke! Luke!"

Luke shot and shot. He tried again and again until finally, miraculously, one of his shots took a crazy bounce on the rim. Everyone held their breath. The ball dropped in and place erupted. Luke's arms sprang up in the air, and he shouted, "I won! I won!" The buzzer rang and his team escorted him off the court.

**There is Gospel in that story – a picture of God's devotion to you and me.**

**We're in a series entitled, *From Meetings to Mission*. This is the fourth, the pivotal message in the middle; this is the meeting with you and me.**

## SCRIPTURALLY

**John writes, "*Jesus did many other *signs*...which did not get written down in this book*" (20:30).**

In the first half of his Gospel (**ch.1-11**), John selects **seven miracles** of Jesus to underscore the **identity** and **mission** of Jesus...that people might **believe**.

John begins softly with the quiet miracle of **water** to **wine** at a wedding in Cana (**John 2:1-12**). They had no wine left, none at all. They did have water, jugs and jugs of water. When Jesus spoke, the water turned into wine...the best wine. Amazing wine.

John then tells of a foreign official whose son was **nearly dead** (**John 4:46-54**). The father, on his knees, explains how he'd called every doctor and tried every treatment, he was about to give up when someone told him about this Galilean healer. He'd come to beg Jesus to heal his boy. Jesus said the word and the boy was healed!

John tells of a **lame man** lying at a healing pool for thirty-eight years (**John 5:1-8**). One day Jesus walked by the man who couldn't walk and listened to him. Then Jesus told him to pick up his bed mat and go! And he did!

John includes the miracle of a **little boy's lunch** (**John 6:1-15**). He was in a crowd of thousands who came to hear Jesus teach and see him heal. Just when he was about to open his lunch basket to eat, the little boy was asked to bring it to Jesus. One minute it was a small lunch for him; the next minute, it was Jesus' feast for everyone.

There was the **storm**. The **boat** containing all the disciples was bouncing up and down on the waves. Thunder. Lightening. Storms like that can kill (**John 6:16-21**). They were all afraid – even the professional fishermen in the group. Then came the Master walking on the water! He stepped into the boat and calmed their fears. They reach land safely.

There was the **blind man** by the road; he had lived his entire life in darkness (**John 9:1-12**). Jesus spit on the ground, made some mud, put it on the man's eyes and told him to go wash in Siloam's pool. He did. The light came on. He could now see clearly.

Lazarus, a good friend of Jesus, got sick. His sisters, Mary and Martha, sent for Jesus so he could come and heal Lazarus (**John 11:1-44**). Jesus, apparently intentionally, didn't make it in time to heal him and he died. Four days after his death, he finally shows up. Jesus went to the grave, had the stone rolled back, and after praying, Jesus shouts for **Lazarus** to come out the **grave**...and he does!

Like the crowd in John's Gospel, we are in desperate need of his **signs** and **wonders**...

*...like the party without wine, we have no reason for celebration...*

*...like the dignitary's son, we are spiritually ill...*

*...like the cripple, we can't walk; like the blind beggar we can't see...*

*...like the crowd without food to eat, we hunger for something that satisfies...*

*...like the severe storm on the sea, we constantly battle the storms of life,  
and...*

*...like Lazarus, without Jesus, we are all dead – spiritually dead now, eternally dead later.*

In John's Gospel, Jesus offers to do for **us** what he did for **them**...to bring wine to our table, sight to our eyes, strength to our step, power over our grave.

Why the water to wine? So we might believe Jesus restores what life has taken.

Why mention the noble man's faith? So we might believe Jesus hears our prayers even when we think he doesn't.

Why include the lame man who walked or the blind man who could see? So we might believe Jesus sees a new version of us and gives new vision to us.

Why the walk on water, feed the thousands, raise the dead miracles? So we know Jesus *still* stills the storms of life, *still* offers meaning to life, and *still* brings dead people to life.

In the second half of his book, John adds one more miracle, the miracle of miracles, the **death** and **resurrection** of Jesus Christ – testified to by all the disciples and written in the Book.

But they are only a taste of everything Jesus did – enough so that we might believe.

**John notes that, “Jesus did many...signs in the **presence** of his **disciples**...” (20:30).**

Each of these signs was done in the presence of the disciples with the divine design that the disciples would **pass them on** to the rest of the world (**Meetings to Mission**).

**John said (3:16), “For God so loved the world that he sent his Son...”** This verse underscores the importance of God’s presence and the witness of his disciples.

The main message of the miracles is the **Miracle Worker** himself. He wants us to know we are never alone. We are never without his help, hope, or strength. God is nearer than we imagine; we are stronger than we think.

He wants us to **know**...

*...he knew us before you were the size of a freckle in your mother’s womb (Jeremiah 1:4-5) because you were his idea (Ephesians 1:11-12)*

*...he knows **everything** about you (Psalm 139:1) - when you sit down and when you rise up (Psalm 139:2); he has numbered the hairs on your head (Matthew 10:29-31).*

*...he has **adopted** you into my family (Romans 8:31), **loves** you as his own child (I John 3:1) with an everlasting love. (Jeremiah 31:3) and will take care of you (Matthew 6:31-33).*

*...he can’t stop thinking about you (Psalm 139:17-18) because you are his treasured possession (Exodus 19:5) and he will not let anything ever **separate** you from my love (Romans 8:38-39).*

When my sons were small, and I was traveling, I’d return with a gift for them. When I’d get home, they’d ask, “What did you bring us?” They’d run off with their new cap, basketball, shirt, etc. It was okay – because they’d be back. It wasn’t the presents that were reassuring, it was my presence. So it is with Jesus. Believe!

## STATISTICALLY

Just for fun, Peter Stoner took **48** (of over 300) Old Testament prophecies which are fulfilled in Jesus and calculated the **probability** they would come true.

Here are ten examples of the forty-eight:

- 1) Messiah would be born at Bethlehem (**Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1**)
- 2) Messiah would be preceded by a messenger (**Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1,2**)
- 3) Messiah would Enter Jerusalem on a donkey (**Zechariah 9:9; Luke 19:35,37a**)
- 4) Messiah would be betrayed by a friend (**Psalms 41:9; Matthew 10:4**)
- 5) Messiah would be sold for 30 pieces of silver (**Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:15**)
- 6) The money to be thrown in God's house (**Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:5**)
- 7) The price given for Potter's field (**Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:7**)
- 8) Messiah stood dumb before his accusers (**Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:12-19**)
- 9) The hands and feet and side of Messiah were pierced (**Psalms 22:16; Luke 22:33**)
- 10) Messiah would be crucified with thieves (**Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38**)

The probability of all 48 happening in one person: 1 in  $10^{157}$  (1 in ten with **157 zeros**).

To put that into perspective, take an electron (one of the smallest objects we know). It takes 25,000,000,000,000,000 (quadrillion) in single file to make a line one inch. If you could count 250 electrons a minute, 24 hours a day, it would take you 19,000,000 years just to count that one inch.

Now imagine that line of electrons that goes around the world a few times—one long line of electrons ( $10^{157}$ ) – and a blindfolded man randomly picks just the right one.

**The odds of that happening are astronomical; the odds that anyone other than Jesus, the Son of God, could fulfill these 48 prophecies is, likewise, astronomical. The evidence is in; the **evidence is convincing**: Jesus is the Christ. **Believe!****

## **SENSIBLY**

John concludes this chapter writing (20:31), *"These things are written that you may believe that **Jesus** is Messiah, the Son of God, and that by **believing** you may have life in his name."*

The “you” here is plural (one of only two in John’s Gospel, cf. **19:35**) and it refers to all the **readers** and **hearers** of the Gospel everywhere of all time...so you and I and our neighbor.

Believing Jesus is *Messiah* means believing he is the (whole) point of Scripture: that he is the “Son of Man” (**Daniel 7**), the promised son of David (**2 Samuel 17**), the prophet like Moses (**Deuteronomy 18**), the seed of Abraham (**Genesis 12**) and the seed of the woman (**Genesis 12**). It means believing Jesus is the core message and **fulfillment** of all of **Scripture**.

Believing that Jesus is also the *Son of God*, also means that we believe Jesus is not just a great human being, though he is definitely that. It means we believe that Jesus is God’s One and Only Son, the eternal Word of God, begotten, not made, the One celebrated in John’s prologue, full of grace and Truth. Jesus is the **eternal God** who came in human flesh.

C.S. Lewis, a professor at Cambridge University, an agnostic who became a believer in Jesus wrote: *“I’m trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus: ‘I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God.’ That is one thing we cannot say. A man who was merely a man and said the things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God or else a madman or something worse.”*

Jesus claims to be the Son of God, to have been crucified for our sins, and risen for our new life. We have just two choices: His claims are true, or his claims are false.

If his claims are false, either he knew they were false and was deliberately misleading people, or he thought they were true and was delusional.

Misleading people would make him a hypocrite and a liar. It would also make him a fool, because he was crucified for knowingly misleading people. If he thought his claims were true (and they weren’t), we’d call him a lunatic.

But if his claims are true and he is who he says he is, then he is God and Lord and each one of us has to decide if we’ll accept his Lordship or reject it.

C.S. Lewis concludes: *“You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a lunatic; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being [just] a great human teacher. He has not left that option open to us. He did not intend to.”*

The invitation is not to **become believers** but to **be believers** (it is present tense). That is, believing is not merely a once in a lifetime decision made

years, even decades before. Believing is an ongoing series of decisions made Sunday by Sunday, day by day, sometimes hour by hour until Jesus comes again.

This sentiment is reminiscent of the urgency of Uncle Sam in the WW1 recruiting poster: I want (need) you!

The last phrase, “*by means of his name* (person),” is, in fact, a **final invitation** to a life of simple prayer in a Gospel full of invitations to prayer. Jesus seeks our **company**.

**If we believe, John tells us we will have “Life” (capital “L”).**

This Life – in its fullest sense - only occurs where there is **trust** in God’s Son.

This Life is, by the Gospel’s definition, where there is no longer any fear of death, the heavy weight of guilt, the horrid emptiness of meaninglessness, the lifeless absence of God, and the futile quest of the world’s multiple gods and idols.

This Life is present wherever Jesus is and where he is trusted and obeyed.

Need grace? Jesus’ work of redemption is still finished. Need assurance? His tomb is still empty. Need a second chance? The fire is still burning on the Galilean shore.

John’s hope is that **we** will believe, that **unbelievers** will believe, and that **believers** will keep on believing that “*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*” (**John 20:31**).

There it is. The hope of John, of his Gospel, of God, of this message: that we’d believe, not in our power, not in humanity’s ability to help itself, not in tarot cards or good fortune, not in good looks or good luck. But that we would believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the risen One, the Son of God.

The central command of the New Testament is to **believe**. The decision is yours!

**God is fully devoted to us – he sent his Son – and over and over and over again he “passes” us a miracle, hoping we will notice it’s him and believe...**

May God bless your life with **more miracles** than you can count.

May your water become cabernet, your dark storms springtime sun. May he feed thousands through your picnic basket of faith. May you walk like the just-healed cripple, see like the once-blind man, live like the once-dead Lazarus.

May you dwell in the **grace** of the cross, the **hope** of the empty tomb, and the **assurance** of his restoring power.

But most of all, may you believe—believe that God is your ever-present **help** in time of trouble. And in his **presence**, may you find **rest**.

**Prayer:**

Father, thank you for raising Jesus from the dead – for comforting Mary in her distress, for offering peace to the panicked disciples, for meeting Thomas in his wonderings and doubts, and calling us to be believers and followers of Jesus.

Thank you for all the prophetic fulfillments and the miracles Jesus did that provide us with evidence of his identity and mission. Thank you for your invitation to believe and keep on believing in Jesus.

Thank you for your devotion toward us – for knowing us before we were born, for knowing our comings and goings, for loving us with an everlasting love, for caring for us day by day, for adopting us into your family. Father, Jesus, Spirit, we love you.

In the name of the Risen Christ, Amen.

Dr. Douglas Kamstra  
Covenant CRC  
7171 Willard Ave. SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49548