**Sunday 16th July 2017 Message**

**What do you believe in?**

**Introduction**

***John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.***

God had one mission in mind from the beginning of time. To form a community on earth that which would freely choose to exercise His power and authority and rule on this in earth with the same love He has for all. To that end God had to send His son into the world so that we could enter His family, His community, and be like Jesus.

Today we continue our study of Johns gospel in Chapter 4 which reveals the heart of God as Jesus pursues another one who was far from God. A royal official in Herod Antipas’s household, a high ranking wealthy member of Roman society, the Herod hated by the Jews, the Herod who had been vicious against Jesus’ own family. He examples His Fathers passion for all mankind, He pursues all mankind so they may not perish in this life or the next, so that they can be His beloved children.

**Background**

Last week we saw how Jesus pursued the bad Samaritan at the well. The lowest of all in the eyes of the Jews, a Samaritan, a woman, a woman of multiple relationships, an outcast.

For God so loved the WORLD, so that WHOEVER believes, may not perish. This includes the lowest of the low, and this week we will see how Jesus pursues the lowest of the high in society.

Jesus is pursuing you no matter how insignificant you feel you are, or how big and important you think you are, He is after you to be one of His royal children.

***What do you believe in?***

Do you believe in miracles? Do you believe in healing? Do you believe in angels? Do you believe that God can give you a gold tooth? Do you believe in the gift of prophecy, or a word of knowledge? Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead? Do you marvel and believe God could fill this room with gold dust or a cloud of glory? Do you believe that God can make you prosperous?

All of these things are possible, and do happen, but believing in them alone will not save you. They may deliver you from certain situation. They may, give you hope. They may make you behave differently. But they will not save you.

Signs and wonders are a great gift from God, but if we believe in the sign, even desire the sign, we have missed the point.

If I love the sign, and believe in the sign, in Lelant that says St Ives this way, but never went to St Ives it would be stupid.

The sign points to the ultimate goal. The signs and wonders of God point to Him and to Jesus, it is Him in whom we should believe as the Saviour of the world.

Let us look at what happened after the woman got excited about the word of knowledge Jesus gave to her.

**Slide** – ***John 4:39-42***

Jesus pursued one bad Samaritan who led many to Christ without any formal training, or script, or anointing.

Initially they believed the woman’s testimony about the sign, the word of knowledge about how many relationships she had had. Her testimony caused them to enquire more from this rabbi with a strange gift that had dared to come into a Samaritan village. They persuaded Jesus to stay for two days and eventually they came to believe the all important thing that would save them eternally

***“Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world”***

Remember why Jesus had left Jerusalem because He was about to be challenged by the Pharisees over His influence on the people they believed they had religious authority over. They, did NOT believe that this is THE CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.

The Samaritans could have just believed Jesus was a man who had the gift of the word of knowledge, that would not have saved them.

Johns purpose in writing the gospel was not just that we would believe in the signs and wonders of Jesus, or His marvellous teaching, but that we would believe He is the Saviour of the world. ***John 20:31***

**Slide** – ***John 4:43-45***

These are a couple of strange verses, Jesus left Samaria to go to Galilee, even though He knew that a prophet was not honoured in his own home or county? So why is Jesus going, He fully expects people not to believe who He is? He could even expect not to be received by the people. Even Jesus’ brothers did not believe who He was, but believed He was a miracle worker and encouraged Him to become more public***. John 7:5***

Yet we read here that the Galileans received Him, BECAUSE they had seen all the miracles He had done in Jerusalem.

Jesus pronounced incredible judgement over three towns in Galilee, which are all on the shores of the lake in Matthews gospel

**Slide** - ***Matt 11:21-24 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."***

***NKJV***

WOW, people who see signs and wonders and believe Jesus is a miracle worker but not that He is the Christ will be punished more than Sodom.

It is clear, that Jesus intentions in doing signs and wonders was to bring people to a belief that He is the Messiah, the Saviour of the World. Not all who were healed or delivered by Jesus, as far as we know, came to that level of belief, but many who witnessed His works did.

Today’s key text shall we read it together.

**Slide** - ***John 4:46-54***

***So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe." The nobleman said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies!" Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives." So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, "Your son lives!" Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives." And he himself believed, and his whole household. This again is the second sign Jesus did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.***

**Slide** – Things we know about the nobleman

1. His son is in Caperneaum – a city we saw Jesus warn because of their unbelief
2. A royal official possibly Roman of Herod’s house in Tiberias
3. The Herod who beheaded Jesus cousin JB
4. Personal crisis – his son on the point of death – desperation drives people to faith
5. Receives the greatest words of hope, believes and obeys and goes, does not insist on his own way, or wait for a miracle
6. His faith grows - Believes who Jesus is, (and is multiplied) and all of his household

**Slide** - The account tells us that Jesus

* Is all knowing

***John 6:64-65 But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him***.

* Completely Sovereign – he did not yield to the royal officials request to go
* All powerful – there is no distance too large
* Incredibly gracious – he touches anyone who asks

**Slide** - ***John 20:26-29***

Remember how Jesus knew of Thomas’ unbelief and came to help him believe.

**Believe who Jesus is**

**Slide** – all who believe in Him shall be children of God ***John 1:12***

**Slide –** you do not believe because you are not my sheep ***John 10:26***

**Slide–** if you believe not you shall die in your sins ***John 8:24***

**Believe the word of God and obey it, means you accept who He is**

Remember Abraham believed Gods word and left his homeland, had relations with his barren aged wife because God said he would have a son and descendants as many as the stars in the sky, willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. He did not see many signs and wonders.

Moses believed God and took on the mission to lead the people out of Egypt. God empowered him to perform many signs,

**Slide** ***Exodus 4:29-31 Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.*** NKJV

The signs held their attention until they met hardships on the their journey out of Egypt and in the wilderness, then they demanded more signs.

**Slide** ***Exodus 8:18-19 Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not. So there were lice on man and beast. Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had said***

The purpose of Gods signs to the people of Israel, to the people of Egypt, to Pharoah, and to Moses was to point to the sovereignty of God as Saviour of His people. Those who did not believe and obey Gods word met adversity and perished.

**“I am a believer” what does that mean?**

**Slide - *Heb 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. NASU***

Assurance – a concrete foundation – the Word of God, the commandments, the promises, the character of God are a concrete certainty.

Conviction – something we bank our whole life on, the reliability of God and His Word and eternal salvation. We stick to the word because it is good.

This is not the same as faith by experience, we sit on a chair in faith that it will support us, because that is what they are designed to do and always have so far. But it may not due to some technical fault.

We may place our faith in not being poisoned when we go out for a meal because the restaurant has a five star food hygiene rating and we have never been poisoned there before. However, things can go wrong.

Experiental faith is, human faith.

Supernatural faith comes by God stirring our hearts to believe something we have not yet seen.

**Slide** - ***Hebrews 10:38-39 But my righteous one will live by faith, and if he shrinks back,***

***I will not be pleased with him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved. NIV***

As believers in Christ and His word, we are called to **Persevering Faith**

**Signs and Wonders will lead to repentance**

God has a purpose with signs and wonders, to lead people to repentance. His plan is that the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God. What is the glory? It is the goodness of God. We are His agents to reveal the goodness/glory of God so that the earth can be filled with the knowledge of that goodness. In so doing all will have the opportunity to decide to believe in Him as a good God, and wonderful Saviour.

**Slide** ***– Luke 5:3-8*** late addition to notes lets read this together.

This is an early miracle recorded in Luke’s gospel. Remember Jesus had called them to be fishers of men, upto now they had believed His words and that He was a great teacher, but this account gives us Peter’s turning point, his repentance, his turning to accept Christ as Lord.

Note what happens, after Jesus has finished teaching the crowds from the boat, Jesus tells them to go out into deeper water and cast their NETS. Peter says because it is Jesus he will obey but it seemed pointless. Yet Peter only put down one net (original Aramaic) and the net was so full of fish that they had to call for help, to the point the boats were sinking.

Just imagine what the catch might have been like if he had let down more nets.

Was Jesus just hungry for fish or wanting to show off? He was not going to hang around to fillet them and then market them. What was He thinking. He wanted to convey to Peter, the other disciples and us that if we OBEY and evangelize we will have a great harvest of souls. It will be miraculous because Jesus knows where the fish are.

It will be even more miraculous because we will have **repented** from our own attempts and submitted to the Omniscient and Omnipotent, all knowing and all powerful, Saviour of the world.

The repentance and submission of Peter to the Lord as the result of this wonder is a sign to us, pointing to who Jesus is, and what He can do.

**We are in pursuit of signs and wonders**

Throughout history God has revealed Himself in power, He is after all Omnipotent, all powerful. To believe in and be representors of God and His kingdom, requires us to demonstrate His power in a way that points to Him so people will believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Jesus being omniscient, all knowing, knew who would believe and who would not believe, yet it did not stop Him ministering in power to those who needed a touch from God. He did so to show the goodness/glory of God so that the earth would begin to be filled with the knowledge of His Fathers glory.

When we repent, turn to His Lordship, and obey His words, we are naturally supernatural, supernatural that is the normal Christian life. If we truly believe that God sent us into the world to preach the gospel of the kingdom, heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead, we need to rise to the challenge.