

## **Believe The Word**

### **John 4:46-54**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

As much as our world seems to want to have nothing to do with God, as we might presume to believe because we see the moral mess that the United States is in, there is almost an obsession of talking about God. What is God like? Is He involved in human affairs or just sitting out in space watching? Is He upset with sin – in my life in the life of others?

Is He even a He, maybe a she? Are all the different religions in the world simply just manifestations of the same god? In some places, people are encouraged today to have their own vision of God – who he/she is, how he/she interacts in their life, and such.

We are encouraged to not only be accepting of another's views of God, but to be encouraging of others in whatever beliefs they might hold. The whole premise of this approach is that everybody has their own idea of who God is, what He does, and His attitude toward people. And, it is saying that every definition is appropriate and equally true.

In the beginning, God created man in His image. Ever since that time man has been recreating God in man's own image – imagining what he would like God to be. All we need do is go back the Garden of Eden and see that a part of Eve's temptation to eat the fruit was that it would make her like God.

Dear friends, it is a great temptation to believe different things about God. We want God on our terms and according to our thoughts. We are lead to believe that any new ideas about self and God are all valid and acceptable.

Today's world doesn't like to admit that there is any objective truth, something outside of ourselves that states what is true, good, right, and salutary – and states what is false, bad, and unhealthy. Why? Because it goes against self, it denies the importance of **ME**. Our world is wrapped up in self, and what might be right for you, may not be right for me. This has led a good portion of our society today to believe that there is nothing that is true all on it's own. An attitude that goes with this, is that anything that claims any authority over us, we must be skeptical of – it must be questioned.

When we consider these attitudes in the culture in which we live, we can see where it has bred the idea which claims that everybody's ideas of God are all valid, true, and acceptable.

Is that acceptable thinking? If someone wants to claim to be a Christian, can we make up our own truth about God? Or does this sort of approach mean that we have finally created God according to our own imaginings, and according to our own mind?

OK, consider following this method of truth in regard to some other person. How many of you knew me 17 years ago? If someone had stated my name, most of you here would have shrugged your shoulders and admitted that you knew nothing about me. Today, if my name is mentioned

in Clintonville or Shawano, some might know my name. What would be their idea of who Todd Jerabek is? Nathan's dad? Timothy's dad? Mrs. Jerabek's husband? Didn't he coach soccer? Doesn't he shoot in archery league? Isn't he the chaplain for the Shawano Sheriff's department? He's the pastor in Embarrass. He's from back east, New England.

Each of those things is true, but none of them is the total package making up Todd Jerabek. There are some who might have a favorable opinion of me and some who absolutely despise me. But usually, those who come up on either extreme don't know me very well. In fact, most opinions about me – or anybody for that matter – are based on a limited amount of knowledge. Nothing is ever a complete picture of who each of us is.

Even more, who is God? What is God all about? A definition of God will color our approach to all of life from our own personal morality to even how we may vote.

In today's text, Jesus comes into Cana in Galilee and what do they want of him? They want signs and wonders. They want Jesus, the miracle man! They have their preconceived notion of who Jesus is and what He is about. An official comes to Jesus, asking Him to come down and heal his son who was near death. While Jesus indeed heals the official's son, He doesn't do it in the manner that the people expect according to their ideas. Jesus sends him off home with the words, "Go; your son will live." The man believes the word and goes his way.

Who is Jesus and what is Jesus about? God never asked us, "OK, tell me what kind of a God you'd like." God could never really please any one person, we are always changing our minds about what we want. Notice that God does not rely upon opinion polls to decide how He should act. God has not given us the option to post our opinions or give an idea of what our vision for Jesus, the Son of God, should be. In fact throughout the Gospels, when people have their own opinions and visions, Jesus puts them in their place. Jesus comes to do what the Father had sent him to do.

What is Jesus about? Granting life! Jesus is come into the world to grant life. He is the one who has dominion over all of creation, and shows His power over creation, sin, and all of life, by restoring the official's son to health. Jesus is the one who comes to give His life as the payment which sin requires, that is, He comes to give His life unto death for all mankind. Jesus comes in order to grant eternal life to all those who believe Him at His word.

We could try and come up with our own ideas about God. In fact, there are so many who do exactly that. Some claim they have not broken the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment because their stories about another were true, so they didn't gossip. The use of the phrase "Oh my God," is not blasphemy. Many claim their life choices are not sinful – those who have sexual relations outside the boundaries of marriage, those who are unwilling to forgive, those who burn CDs for their friends, and a host of other sins – which people try to claim are not sins.

There is a whole new morality in our society today, it isn't based upon anything but people's own personal opinion and vision of what they'd like their life to be like. And in order to live their lives according to that, they pigeonhole their ideas of who God is and what He expects of them, to fit their own notions.

Unfortunately, you and I often try to do the same thing. We have our ideas of what we *think God thinks of our behavior*. We have our ideas concerning the things we would like God to be about – our ideas of what we'd like God to be doing, and when. We have our own ideas of the signs and wonders we'd like from God, but God gives us what we need.

When it comes to a definition of God, we cannot change Him, nor dictate to Him who He is or what He is about. The Holy Scripture is His revelation of Himself to us. It give us a wonderful picture of who He is, and centers solely on Jesus Christ – the Word of God made flesh, whom He sent into the world to reveal His will toward us. We simply need to trust and believe the Word as did the official in our text.

You believe the Word when you brought your children to be baptized. You believe that God works a miracle through water and the word – that sins are forgiven, faith is begun, and children are united to Christ. That miracle takes place – not *because* you believe it, but because that is what Christ does when His Word of promise is spoken in conjunction with His command to use water and baptize.

Earlier you confessed your sins. Why? You believed the Word of God which proclaims you a sinner in need of the forgiveness purchased by Christ's innocent suffering and death. So, you confessed your sins, believing that the Word of forgiveness which I speak to you, was commanded by Christ to be spoken – that in that Word, the very blood which Christ shed to purchase that forgiveness is applied to you.

In a moment you will gather at Christ's table. You will eat and drink. It is not just bread and wine, but the very body and blood of Christ which is present in this sacred meal. It is the Word of Christ which makes it so. Whether or not you believe, Christ's body and blood are present. And those who eat *believing that Word*, receive the very gracious benefits that God promises to those who eat and drink in faith – forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation.

You know, in comparison to some of the miracles of the Bible, it appears that nothing very exciting happens today – some words spoken, you eat a small wafer of bread, you take a sip of wine – it certainly doesn't look like much.

But appearances can be very deceiving. Today, Christ, the very Word of God, is present and doing incredible things – cleansing sinners and giving them life, giving His body and blood to us to eat and drink, granting and strengthening faith in doubting hearts – and He does it all in His Word.

Dearly beloved of God, Jesus promises to be with you, even to the very end of the age – and He is – He is the Word who does incredible things in your life today and every day. Believe it! Amen.