

Misplaced Trust

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[0:00] We're back in the gospel of John today, John chapter 5.

! I'm going to read verses 1 through 16. Turn to John chapter 5, verses 1 through 16 will be the text for this morning's sermon.

If you'd please stand as we honor the reading of God's word together. After this, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem, by the Sheep Gate, a pool in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades.

In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been an invalid for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, Do you want to be healed?

The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going, another steps down before me. Jesus said to him, Get up, take up your bed, and walk.

[1:28] At once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath, so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, it is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.

But he answered them, The man who healed me, that man said to me, Take up your bed and walk. They asked him, Who is the man who said to you, Take up your bed and walk?

Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, See, you are well. Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you. The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? Youth pastors have a tendency to think of creative ways in order to impart some kind of spiritual truth to their students.

[2:40] But often their creativity gives way to stupidity. The genius ideas that they dreamed up in their office aren't always thought out.

For example, the first church that I served on staff as a youth pastor, I wanted to teach our students to understand the importance of putting their faith and their trust in Jesus.

So, I bought a lot of mousetraps, and I set them up in one of the hallways of the church. Our high school students met first, so I had our high school students pair up with one being blindfolded and the other one providing the blindfolded person with instructions in order to get them through the mousetraps obstacle without getting snapped.

And it was successful. No one got snapped. Then our middle school students came, and it was their time for youth group.

And I suppose feeling as if the mousetrap obstacle was too easy, I decided to get even more creative by having our middle school students go upstairs to begin and to walk downstairs before they got to the mousetrap maze.

[4:16] As the groups began to walk downstairs, a couple of our boys fell behind everyone else. I tried as best as I could to position myself in a place where I could see what was going on at the front and the back of the line.

But as I was looking towards the front, I heard a loud bang come from behind me, and I ran down the hallway, and I saw one of our middle school boys laying on the ground with both of his hands covering his face, and he was crying.

Needless to say, his partner was not a very good leader and did not give him very good instructions.

What had happened is the boy had slammed headfirst into a metal doorway, and he had a large knot on his head to take home with him from youth group to show his mom and dad.

He learned a lesson that night, though he learned it the hard way that you're not always sure whom you can trust.

[5:31] And I learned as well that there are better ways to communicate biblical truth to teenagers. I wanted each of our kids to be saved, but I learned that I didn't have to try to kill them in the process of doing that.

All this to say that whom you trust and whom you put your faith in is important. As we move into John 5 now in our study of this gospel, Jesus gives testimony of himself in this chapter about his true identity.

And in this chapter, Jesus uses words like truly and testimony and witness, and he does so some 20 times. And he does so in order to encourage those who are listening to him, hearing his testimony, to believe it and to receive it.

But we see from this passage that unfortunately that isn't always or wasn't often the case. too often we, like those then, misplace our trust, putting it in things or people other than Jesus.

And so that's the main idea that I want to discuss this morning. That Jesus wants you to trust in him completely, to put your trust in anything above him is to deny him.

[7:11] So again today, we encounter in Scripture individuals whose trust was misplaced. The things that they were trusting in then had a binding and blinding effect on them, and they are things that continue to bind and blind people today.

And isn't it hard these days to know who you can trust? News organizations will report on the same story, but each will spin it in a completely different way.

We receive daily coronavirus updates, and we watch those press conferences, again, on a frequent, almost daily basis.

And we observe in those press conferences our president who is at war with our media, with each one trying to make the other look incompetent by trying to provide some kind of a gotcha moment. Truth and facts and the real issues are unfortunately sometimes lost in the process as more people tune in to those press conferences for the entertainment value than they do to get a good understanding of what exactly is happening right now in our world.

[8:42] And not only do we have that situation, but we have all the prognosticators, all of the experts or the so-called experts who tell us when we can expect to go back to work, who report on all these different numbers and tell us that, well, it's going to get better or it's going to get worse.

And it seems like with each expert, what they say one day very easily changes the next day. This is a difficult time. People have lost their jobs.

Some people have lost their lives. And now is the time where we need to know who can we trust.

Well, today, I hope to show you from Scripture that we can and should trust in Jesus.

We can always trust in Jesus. And that's what Jesus asks us to do. He asks us to trust Him. He tells us also that to trust in anyone or anything else over or above Him is in effect to deny Him.

And so I wonder too how we as Christians are doing right now in displaying that our trust is primarily and first in Jesus Christ.

[10:07] Now is certainly a good time for us to be doing that as the world around us is filled with many doubters, many people who are not sure about what tomorrow might bring or what they might face in the future.

So now is a great time for the church to be the church and to express the truth that we trust in Jesus no matter what and then in doing so to show the rest of the world that they should trust in Him too.

So our scripture today gives us two principles about the danger of misplacing our trust. And the first principle is that trusting in superstition binds.

That comes from verses 1 through 9. Trusting in superstition binds. Now, some superstitions are humorous. Wade Boggs, for example, a Hall of Fame third baseman who played much of his career with the Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees used to eat a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken before every game that he played.

And baseball is a game filled with those kinds of humorous superstitions. One of those, if you watch closely, is that they will not touch the foul line.

[11:33] When players go onto the field and come off of the field, they will jump over the foul line because to touch it for whatever reason is to bring bad luck upon yourself and the rest of your team.

And it's not only the players who get into it, the fans really get into it as well. We've got the rally caps that we wear as we're watching our favorite team hoping that they will come back from behind. There are things like the rally monkey, there are things like the rally squirrel in baseball, if you know about those things, mascots that fans get attached to and they believe that there is something to them that will bring good luck or good fortune to their team.

And not only that, but fans will be mindful of what they wear and where they sit as they watch their team play, thinking that what they're doing, what they're wearing, where they're positioned will have an effect on the outcome of the game.

But those kinds of superstitions aren't the same kind of superstitions that this passage has in mind. Verses 1-9 deal with a kind of superstition that has a binding effect on those who trust in them for deliverance of some sort.

[12:51] I want to read verses 1-7 again. After this, there was a feast of the Jews and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now, there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, an Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roof colonnades.

In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been an invalid for 38 years.

When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, Do you want to be healed? The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going, another steps down before me.

Now, before proceeding on, there is a technical issue that we first need to deal with in this passage. Now, I've been reading out of the ESV translation, translation, and if you have an ESV translation, you'll see, like mine, that verse 4 isn't provided.

It goes from verse 3 straight to verse 5. That's the case also with the CSB translation. Other translations, like the New American Standard, have verse 4, but they've put it in brackets.

[14:15] And then still other translations, like the King James version, don't have any brackets at all. They include verse 4 as it is. And so here's what verse 4 says.

For an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up, or in the King James version, troubled up, the waters. Whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in, it was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.

So now we ask the question, why do some Bible translations keep that verse? Why do others put brackets around it? And still, why do others erase it entirely?

Well, let me preface what I'm about to say with some background about the manuscripts of Scripture. Today, the church possesses hundreds and in some cases, thousands of copies of the original copies of Scripture.

that were written. But we are not in possession of the original copies, I should say. We have copies that date back thousands of years, soon after when the originals were written, but we don't have in hand those original first copies of the Scriptures.

[15:38] So, scholars have been able to look back over the large amount of manuscripts that we have and they're able to compare them and reconstruct as best as they can the original.

Occasionally, they've found a manuscript or a copy that dates further back than another. And so, the best copies, manuscripts that we have of the Gospel of John do not include verse 4.

So, how did verse 4 get there? Well, it's very possible and likely that this was a gloss.

Now, a gloss is a note written in the margin by whomever was the copyist. And here, likely, a footnote, a little note was written in the margin giving explanation as to why this superstition existed, that people thought an angel was coming and stirring or troubling the waters.

In comparing verse 4 with the rest of Scripture, though, it doesn't seem to fit with the character of God or with His holy angels.

[16:58] Think about it. An angel is sent every once in a while to stir up these waters that whoever by chance sees it first and is able to run and do a cannonball into the pool and be instantly healed.

Well, whatever the case may be, this verse's inclusion or exclusion does not change the interpretation of this passage. And it certainly does not bring into question the inerrancy of Scripture, which I believe in.

The manuscript variances are very small and do not at all change the message of the Bible, the message of the gospel.

The Bible, the Bibles that we have today are the inspired, inerrant Word of God. But history does tell us some things about this pool.

First of all, that it had a reddish tint to it, which was strange, which may have led to the superstitions that there was something special about this pool of water.

[18:07] Also, it was fed by wells and that could have created the stirring that people saw every once in a while. But again, whatever the case might have been, people did believe that this pool had some kind of healing power or healing ability.

And that certainly was the belief of the man who had been an invalid for 38 years. I'm 37 years old. This man had suffered longer than I have been alive. And so, think about how desperate of a situation that he was in.

That's a long time to suffer, 38 years. Many of you know I've had a recent ski injury that I'm recovering from, but each night I go to bed and each morning that I wake up, my shoulder throbs. Now, I know for some of you, and this will heal, for some of you, you have those kinds of ailments and they're just always present. You wake up in the morning and your body is cranky and it's popping and it's creaking, or you have some old injury that just hurts you and you suffer from it in such a way, though probably you're still able to get around and do a lot of the things that you need to do, but this man could not.

[19:36] This man was a prisoner of his body and had been for a very long time. Perhaps his ailment limited him so much that he could only get around by crawling on his stomach.

That's how bad his situation was. So imagine his life. Every day, likely, spent with one eye on the pool, watching and waiting for it to stir.

On the occasions when he saw it, he had to move quickly. But the problem was that he couldn't move quickly because of his malady.

So imagine how many times over the span of 38 years that this man crawled on his belly, straining to reach for that water in order to be healed, only for someone else time and again to jump in before he could immerse himself in those waters which he believed would release him from his prison.

And how many times then, dejected and despairing, he would have to crawl back to his bed, having once again had his chance for healing in his mind be taken away.

[21:13] to go back, to watch, and to wait some more for 38 years. 38 years filled with pain, sorrow, and disappointment.

You know, even OU fans and Dallas Cowboy fans haven't had to endure that much disappointment. They win a championship in football at least once in every 20 to 25 years.

Now, hopefully, now I know that you have the opportunity to mute me or turn me off, so hopefully you're still with me. But Jesus sees this man, probably staring at the pool, looking to it for his salvation, looking for it for his deliverance, brokenhearted, having had that healing elude him for so long, and then Jesus approaches him.

Verse 6, it says that Jesus asked him, do you want to be healed? And the sick man answered him, sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.

Jesus said to him, get up, take up your bed, and walk. And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. So it seems initially that when Jesus approaches this man, the man believes that Jesus will buy into his superstition, that Jesus will help him get into the water when it is stirred so that he will be healed.

[22:57] But Jesus has other plans. He would show that the man's faith and trust in superstition was misplaced. Instead of trusting in superstition, he should trust in him.

See, this man's superstitions had a binding effect on him. He was bound to that place. He was bound to that location. He was bound to that belief that even if he was for some reason able to make it to those waters when they had been stirred first, he would have been disappointed to find out, I believe, that they lacked the ability to give him the healing that he sought.

Superstitions still bind today. We look in other religions, other false religions. Hinduism, for example. When I was in seminary, I attended an apologetic seminar that was geared towards reaching people of the Hindu religion.

religion. And one of those speakers had grown up in India and had been a part of a family that practiced Hinduism. When he was a boy, he told us that he contracted polio. And though by that time, there was a vaccine, he told us that that vaccine was withheld from him because according to their religion, his ailment was a product of bad karma.

[24 : 39] He was told as a young boy that he had received this disease as punishment for wrongdoings that he had done in a past life.

Could you imagine being a little boy, eight, nine, ten years of age and being told that for the rest of your life you will be confined to a wheelchair and you will suffer because of your bad karma, because of sins that you committed from a past life that you have no recollection of.

I remember him sharing that story to us with tears streaming down his face and talking about how lightly Americans talk about karma and how crushing it was for him to grow up with that understanding that he had been suffering and would suffer for the rest of his life for sins that he had committed from a past life.

Karma haunted him until he came to trust in Jesus Christ. As a born-again Christian, he understood God understood that just like ours, was not dependent upon having good karma, but placing your faith and your trust in Jesus Christ and what he's accomplished for you, not through your having good karma, but because of what he has done for you through his life, through his death, and through his resurrection.

Ephesians 2, 8, and 9 says it very plainly about our salvation. For by grace you have been saved through faith, not through good karma, not through good deeds, by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works so that no one may boast.

[26 : 44] So in addition to that kind of superstition that exists today, also we see the same kind of superstitious beliefs that bind taking place within Roman Catholics, Roman Catholicism.

They often will keep depictions of saints, whether that be a statue, whether that be a necklace that they wear around their neck, or rings that they put on their fingers, or whatever the case may be, images of all sorts and sizes and varieties, and the assumption is that those things will protect you, or give you some kind of good luck, or maybe if you pray to this certain saint, they will help you out with this situation that you're in.

But, what sort of protection can they give that Jesus can't provide? provide. It's like saying, yeah, we like Jesus and we need Jesus, but just in case, here's some other insurance policies, and just in case he's too busy maybe to care about us or what's going on.

Nowhere in Scripture, nowhere is such a practice ever promoted. And truly, those practices take on the form of idolatry.

it's superstition. Jesus says to trust in him, not any other person, not any other belief system.

[28 : 29] To trust in anything else besides him is to deny him by casting doubt over his sovereignty.

humanity. Likewise, another way where we see superstition binding people today in our culture is through the health and wealth gospel.

It's rooted in superstitious belief. The thought that they teach that you can pray God into a corner where he is forced or coerced by your prayers said with enough faith that he must answer them as if he was some kind of cosmic genie who served at our disposal.

Preachers of this faith say that they can heal you or that you will be blessed if you come to their events and if you sow a seed, which financially means give me your money.

Give me your money and you will be made well. Listen, they are charlatans, they are heretics, do not listen to what they have to say.

[29 : 47] They are preaching a false gospel, they may use the Bible but they are not preaching the Bible. They are using it out of context. They are blind guides who are leading blind people.

Do not follow them because they will lead you, as Jesus said, blind guides do into a pit. And their teaching has an abiding effect on its victims.

And I have witnessed that firsthand. I have witnessed people who were sick but they were too afraid to go see the doctor, they were too afraid to talk about their illness because they thought in doing so they would not be saved or it would endanger their ability to be healed.

Is that not superstition? I have witnessed firsthand people who have given their money to these preachers, to these ministries, and who are broke as a result of it while they are living fat and happy, flying in their jets and living in their multiple mansions.

Now I want to say that this does not mean that we don't believe that God can and does heal miraculously. still today, I have witnessed that firsthand too.

[31:07] As a matter of fact, when members of our church have received a cancer diagnosis or are going through something very difficult or painful in life, we have them come to the front of the church and we lay hands on them and we pray for God's deliverance, but we understand that this is a fallen world.

We understand that this world is not as it should be, that it is under the curse of sin and that if healing doesn't come to that person, it isn't because of their or our lack of faith.

We understand as Christians, as the Lord has told us, that suffering is a part of the Christian life.

Jesus suffered on the cross and in so doing he provided atonement for the sins of his people.

Suffering is hard to endure but godly suffering, godly sorrow produces great things and great joy.

The apostles, as a matter of fact, they didn't believe in the health and wealth gospel, they suffered as a result of their taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

[32:30] And Jesus said that this would be the very thing that would happen to them for following him. It's what he says to everyone who follows him, that to follow him means that you will suffer by denying yourself.

But you will find out that in denying yourself, you are becoming more like Christ. And it's a suffering that brings joy. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 16, 24-26 and take these words to heart.

Jesus told his disciples, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? Also, we see in our Lord's calling of the Apostle Paul that suffering would be a part of his ministry.

Acts 9, 15-16, But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine, speaking of Paul, to carry my name before the Gentiles and the kings and the children of Israel, for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.

[33:46] But then, as we've seen before, we see over and over again Paul talking about how blessed it is to be persecuted, how for him to live is Christ and to die is gain because he understood the suffering of self-denial and what it brought in making him more like Jesus Christ and the joys that come along with that.

And I could go on and on, but it suffice to say that these are verses that you won't ever hear health and wealth preachers preach on.

Men like Kenneth Copeland, Joel Osteen, and Todd White, among countless many others. Our suffering in this world is used by God to remind us that this world is not our home and to prepare us for the life that is to come by making us now more like Christ.

I'm sure that you like me have suffered in this life and that God has used those times to deepen your faith in Him, to sharpen your focus on Him.

And I'm sure that you, like me, I'm thankful for those times because they've increased my faith and my trust in the Lord as a result.

[35:15] I encourage you in the time that we have, watch a film called American Gospel. I think you can find it on YouTube for free and it will talk all about these things, exposing the health and wealth gospel and all of its superstitions and showing you from Scripture how insufficient and how wrong and heretical it is.

Please take the time to watch that. So, maybe you don't trust in these superstitions, but I'm sure that you know someone who does.

As a believer, you are called to speak the truth in love to them. Tell them about Jesus. Tell them about how you've trusted in Him and how He's never forsaken you any time that you have done that.

That trusting in superstition binds, but trusting in Jesus sets free. So, principle number one of misplaced trust is that putting trust in superstition is misplaced because it binds.

And the second principle is this. Trusting in man-made tradition blinds. Trusting in man-made tradition blinds. Verses 9-10.

[36:34] Now that day was the Sabbath, so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, it is the Sabbath and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed. Well, now this probably isn't going to

and shouldn't come as a news flash to any one of you, but nowhere in Scripture does it ever record God giving the command that it is unlawful for anyone to carry their bed on the Sabbath, especially someone whom he has just healed.

By this time, the rabbis in their historical interpretation of the law had added 39 specific types of work that they deemed to be illegal for anyone to participate on the Sabbath day. And the last of those 39 rules outlawed carrying anything from one place to another on the Sabbath. This was a man-made law that had become a part of the tradition of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

And so they were very upset when they saw this man who had been laying paralyzed for 38 years walking with his bed because he had broken one of their laws.

[38:07] Here we see how misguided and how evil man-made traditions can be.

Instead of rejoicing that here was a man who has been paralyzed for 38 years and now suddenly he is walking instead of rejoicing in that, instead of rejoicing in the one who had healed him, they got all over his case.

They asked him mean spirited and probing questions. What are you doing? Who do you think that you are? Who did this to you?

Who told you that this was okay? They were so blinded by their man-made traditions that they couldn't see with spiritual eyes what had just happened.

A man who had been paralyzed for 38 years was healed. His body had been broken. Now it was completely healed.

[39:14] But instead of being interested in what God was doing, they were more concerned and they were more upset with this man for breaking their tradition. And so verses 11 through 13 it says that the man who had been healed answered them, the man who healed me, he said, that man said to me, take up your bed and walk.

Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was for Jesus had withdrawn as there was a crowd in the place. Over the years as I've read through this passage, preached on this before years ago, I keep going back and forth over whether or how to determine the actions of this man. Was he aloof? He just didn't know what was going on. He didn't know what would happen as a result of his eventually telling the Pharisees that it was Jesus who healed him or was there more going on here?

Was he more concerned about saving himself by disassociating himself with Jesus who had healed him? And I've read commentators who have done the same.

Some say he was aloof, others say that he was intentionally distancing himself from the Lord and was an act of rejecting him.

[40:51] And here's what I think. Not very long ago, we were in John chapter four, and we studied there Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman whom he met at the well.

We saw there how Jesus revealed himself to her and how having believed that he was the Messiah, she instantly left everything behind her water jar and she ran back home to go share with her neighbors whom she had been hiding from before that she had met the Messiah and invited them to come back out with her so that they would have a chance to meet Jesus too.

she was excited. But I don't see that same kind of excitement from this man who was paralyzed but who had been made well by Jesus.

Taking up his bed and walking in response to Jesus' command was convenient for him until it threatened to cost him something.

what I see here in him is the same kind of thinking that I think we see in Genesis 3. Remember Adam? And when he's confronted by God for sinning by eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree, remember immediately he shifts the blame to Eve.

[42:29] It's not my fault, it's her fault and indirectly it's your fault too because you're the one who gave me to her, this was all your idea, I am without blame or so he hoped to shift the blame off of himself.

And I think in a similar way we see the same thing happening here with the man who had been healed. In essence, when he reports back to the Pharisees, what he's saying to them is something like this, look, this wasn't my idea.

Some guy came along, he told me to pick up my bed and to walk, and listen, it's been 38 years since I've been able to walk.

What was I supposed to do? I only did what he told me to do, this isn't my fault. the Bible says that we will know people by their fruits.

The fruit of the Samaritan woman meant that she went and shared the gospel with people in her town and that many, the Bible says, believed as a result of not just her testimony but of meeting Jesus themselves.

[43 : 45] Here we see the fruit of this man's interaction with Jesus is that it led to the beginning or the escalation of persecution against him.

And to me, it doesn't appear that this man sticks up for Jesus at all. In fact, it seems to me that he's trying to distance himself as much as he can from him so that he won't encounter the wrath of the Pharisees and what they were able to do to isolate a person from society.

He had experienced that for long enough. What this man needed, I think, was to seriously consider Jesus' words that are recorded in Luke 12, 8 through 9.

Let's look at them. And I tell you, our Lord says, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God.

But the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. There's a story from long ago about Alexander the Great that during an intense battle that his army was involved with, one of his soldiers fled in fear.

[45 : 20] He deserted his fellow soldiers at the time when they needed him most. So after the battle was over, Alexander's men were victorious.

They went, they found the deserter, they apprehended him, and they brought him before Alexander the Great. As the man, the deserter, stood trembling before his general, his commander, Alexander the Great, Alexander looked at him and he asked him, why did you run?

The soldier replied, because I was afraid. Alexander then said, so I see. Tell me, what is your name?

The soldier mumbled under his breath, not wanting Alexander to hear what he had to say. So the great warrior said to him, speak up, what is your name?

The young soldier looked up and he said to him, my name is Alexander. Alexander the Great replied, either change your behavior or change your name.

[46 : 52] If you're embarrassed by Jesus, if you're afraid to confess your faith in him before men, well then, either change your behavior or, more tragically, maybe you should cease to call yourself a Christian.

Jesus finds the man after he's been interrogated and it says in verse 14 that when he found him, Jesus said to him, see you are well, sin no more that nothing worse may happen to you.

Jesus had already healed the man, but here he comes with an added grace, with the excellent piece of advice, go and sin no more.

And how would the man respond to his kindness? Well, we've already seen verse 15 through 16, the man went away, he told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him, and this is why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

Again, it was convenient for the invalid to receive blessing from Jesus, but once his association with him began to cost him something, he denied him by providing the Pharisees with the name that they were seeking.

[48 : 24] The Pharisees loved their man-made traditions and laws, so much so that they were completely blinded to the reality that the Son of God was in their midst.

They couldn't see it, and instead of abandoning their traditions and following him, confessing that here is the Messiah, the Son of God, instead they persecuted him in devised schemes that would lead him to the cross.

Here, in their minds, was a newcomer threatening their status quo. They felt threatened that this newcomer would come and he would take their place, take their position, sit in their pew in the synagogue, I don't know, and they wanted to protect their traditions.

They wanted to do so so badly that they pressured the paralyzed man now healed and they also pressured the rest of the Jewish community to join them in their rejection of Jesus as the Christ. Tradition has a way of blinding us to what God is doing and the church is not immune from that today.

[50 : 00] I knew a friend who not too terribly long ago was called to another ministry. While he was at his church, he and some others had brought about some changes furnishings that saw growth

take place within that congregation both spiritually and numerically.

And one of the things that he had the audacity to do was to switch out the pulpit. Not only that, but some other furnishings that were in the sanctuary.

And so when it was his time to prepare to depart, he did all that he could to prepare that congregation for what was next, to be looking towards the future.

And at his last business meeting, a disgruntled member of the congregation decided to stand up and to plead for the congregation to switch the old pulpit back and to get rid of all of the other changes that had been made because he wanted to preserve the tradition of the church.

Such attitudes make idols out of tradition. And the church can be guilty of worshiping its past instead of looking forward to what God has in store for them should they continue to go and make disciples.

[51:47] Not focused on the present and what the present means for the future but looking back to how things used to be. And you can enjoy how things used to be. There's nothing wrong with that but it's when you make an idol out of it.

It should be that way now. It becomes again an idol. And the words that kill the church the sentence that has killed many churches is the sentence we've never done it that way before.

Because we're too stuck thinking about our past our current traditions to get over what God might be wanting to do through us right now.

now is a good time for the church for Christians to spend time in reflection over what it means to follow Christ and over what it means for a church to help people grow spiritually.

Why are we here? What are we supposed to be about doing? And have we allowed ourselves to get caught up in traditions or superstitions thinking that we can do different things to draw people in or keep old traditions in order to keep people from leaving or what not?

[53:16] Now is a good time for reflection and now is a good time to be in prayer over what God wants most from his church moving forward.

So let's trust in Christ. Let's not be bound by our superstitions. Let's not be blinded by our traditions. The church belongs to the Lord.

The church is his and he will as he's always done preserve it. Henry Blackaby I think put it very well when he gave the advice for Christians and for churches.

Watch to see where God is working and join him in his work. That involves trust and this passage encourages us that putting our trust in Christ frees us to see what he is doing and he invites us to get involved in his work.

So now let's look at how we should apply this message to our lives. You know that in 2020 our vision is to pursue the best Highland Park Baptist church and the coronavirus hasn't stopped us from prayerfully pursuing that.

[54:48] And we see that as part of that we need to build community. Well, how do we do that? We check on one another. People in the church see how they are doing.

Maybe they are tempted to doubt during this time. But checking on them, talking with them, this is ways in which we build community. Going and talking to our neighbors.

You may know neighbors who are caught up in these superstitions or traditions. A great opportunity to speak the truth in love to them right now as we have so much free time on our hands.

Second, equip believers. We encourage one another to follow Christ. Some of you have lost your jobs. Some of you have lost a close friend, a loved one during this time.

And you may be tempted to doubt in God's sovereignty or God's plan. We equip one another by pointing each other back to the word. By sharing God's word.

[55:57] It has a cleansing effect. It has a building effect. It equips us to live this life. Though we know that suffering is a part of it, we are able to allow our lights to shine brilliantly that people would see Christ in us.

And we share Jesus again. Some of these things overlap. Share Jesus. Now is a great time to do that. Especially you know your neighbors are at home.

Some of them may be involved in one of these religions that I mentioned before. One of these false religions. Maybe they are caught up in the health and wealth gospel. Now is a great time. Maybe they don't believe anything or they don't know what they should believe or maybe there is a God or not.

It doesn't matter. Now is a great time to share Jesus. You can do that by checking on your neighbors. You can do that over social media as I've seen a lot of you do. Just share Jesus. It doesn't matter whether it's over a phone call or over Zoom or face to face. Share Jesus. Now is a great time to do it. And then teach the word. But listen, you're not going to be a very good teacher of the word if you don't know the word very well.

[57:09] And so again, what a great time for you to be spending in God's word. to be reading it, to be abiding in it. What a great time for us to start having, if we weren't doing it before, family Bible studies.

Or again, just reading the word and calling someone and sharing with them what God has put on your heart as a result of it. But what a great time for us to feed on the word of God.

And now is always the time truly to do that. But I mean, we have so much free time. Immerse yourself in the word of God and you will be blessed by God. I guarantee you, if you don't know where to start, I recommend that people start in the Gospel of John.

I think it's a great starting place. I encourage you to do that. We're still pursuing the best Highland Park for 2020 and soon we pray and we hope we will be able to meet again physically though that may be limited at first.

We still are the body of Christ. We still are called to trust in him and we are still called to go and boldly declare the good news that Jesus and only Jesus is the way and the truth and the life.

[58:19] Thank you.