

Our Father in Heaven, we come to your word this morning. We pray that his entrance will bring light to our hearts and to our lives, to our souls, that you will do what only you can do, Father. You will save the lost, restore the backslider in the pathways of your righteousness for your namesake. Root and ground the rest of us in your love. We might grow in faith and in hope. and a hope that does not disappoint because your love is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us. We offer these prayers in Jesus' name, amen. If you would please take your copy of the word of God and turn with me in your copy to John four. And the theme in our text this morning is will you trust the word of Christ? That's the question our text is setting before us this evening. And the text, with crystal clarity, sets out the power of Christ's word. Let's actually pick up our reading back a little earlier than we did in the 815 service. We'll pick up in verse 39. And notice that when Christ came to the city of Samaria, Sychar, they received no wonders. They only saw, they only heard, words from Jesus. That's all they needed. Verse 39, many Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony. He told me all that I ever did. So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them and he stayed there two days. Many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, it is no longer because of what you said that we believe. For we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world." That's important, because next verse, after the two days, he departed for Galilee. Now why did Christ go to Galilee? For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown. So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done. Not because they heard, because they saw. All that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast, for they too had gone to the feast. So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine, and at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. So Jesus said to him, unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. You will never believe, literally. The official said to him, sir, come down before my child, my little boy dies. Jesus said to him, go, your son will live. The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him. and went on his way. As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. So he asked them the hour when he began to get better. And they said to him, yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him. The father knew that

was the hour when Jesus had said to him, your son will live. And he himself believed and all his household This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee. Amen. The grass withers and the flower falls off, but this is the word of God and it endures forever. We live in an age that's marked by a crisis of confidence. We all know that something is wrong with the world and we want someone to fix it. We need someone to fix it. Now because we tend to define that problem as something outside of ourselves, in the environment, in the economy, In whatever, out there, Russia doing its thing, Iran doing their thing, China doing their thing, the crime in the inner cities. We tend to define our problems on the outside trying to get into us. We tend to look in faith to some outside agency to help us. As one commentator put it, we all live on the cutting edge of faith. Faith in God or faith in something else. And I wonder what are you trusting in this morning to fix the problems in your life? What kind of things do we trust in as human beings? Well, we trust in the government, right? I am from the government, I am here to help you. The eight or nine, I forget, I have to count them, most frightening words in the English language, Reagan famously said. But it sounds plausible. Trust Washington. We need leadership. We want leadership. And we tend to think if we can just get the right man or the right woman in leadership, The men have been doing a shocking job recently. Maybe some of the ladies can help us. But if we can get the right person in leadership, maybe we can fix the problems afflicting America. It sounds plausible, but as we've said before, Government's at the bottom of the stream, right? It's always downstream from culture, which is always downstream from the spiritual heart of our country. And if the spiritual heart of the country is rotten, then the culture flowing from that heart will also be rotten. And then the government elected by that culture is unlikely to be sweet, clean, and clear. Others will say, well, put your faith in technology. Trust the science. Now, that too is plausible, right? Science has given us great blessings, faster computers, smaller boom boxes. You know, when I was your age, young people, you had to carry your hi-fi, your music on your shoulder in a large box. booming in your ear. Then we went to the Walkman and how sophisticated we thought we were with cassettes. Ask your dad later what they are. Cassettes and a Sony Walkman. And then we went to an iPad, a huge big metal thing that was a little smaller than a Walkman. And then we went to the iPad Nano, which was tiny, as the name suggests. And now we've gone to an invisible music system in our phones running through Spotify and Apple Music. Trust technology. The labor-saving devices that we have in our homes are amazing. Washing machines, tumble dryers,

microwave ovens. It's incredible. Then you try buying a microwave oven that lasts more than seven years. I mean, like, seriously? We can fly a cruise missile halfway around the world and land it on the head of some suicide bomber riding down a dusty road in Afghanistan. And we can't build a refrigerator that will last more than seven years? Well, of course we can. We just deliberately plan them to break after seven years, so you have to go out and buy a new one. And there's darker things behind technology, isn't there? The rise of almighty AI. That's frightening. Trust the science, they say. Give the COVID vaccine to your children when the virus is much less threatening than the vaccine. But trust the science. Or trust the American dream. The real problem is you need more stuff. More stuff in your house. More beautiful stuff, clothes to cover yourself in the appearance of success. Because if you look successful, everyone will think you're wonderful. But as Dad always told me, you can't cover an empty man with a nice suit and make him feel full. And look at the people in Hollywood, the movie stars, they have the American dream on steroids. Are they happy? Is Brad Pitt happy? He's handsome. He looks 35. I think he's 65. It's amazing what plastic surgery can do in Botox. But is he happy? Married to Jennifer Aniston, the girl next door, beautiful, left her for Angelina Jolie. Was he happy in his marriage there? Now there are some things that money can't buy. The Hollywood stars show the deep emptiness that comes when you have everything and yet still realize that you have nothing that really matters. Or what about trust yourself, American individualism? And it comes in a thousand different varieties. They're as old as the hills. It all began with Shakespeare. This above all to thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man. Sounds great, I'm not sure it's true though. Be true to thyself, express thyself, satisfy thyself, define thyself, find thyself. Not hearing many people say, deny thyself. Maybe that'll come along in a wee while. But the idea is, you are unique. You can be anything you want to be. Reach for the skies. Imagination. Imagine what you could be. You're a boy. You can be a girl. You're a girl. You can be a boy. But all this, what cultural scientists call expressive individualism, 200 million people all trying to be unique, pulling in different directions. It's not a great recipe for social cohesion. As we see the tapestry of America begin to unravel with all these different visions of what it means to be unique in our individuality. And so once again, we find ourselves at the feet of that stubbornly persistent and plausible Galilean character, carpenter, sorry. He's looking down to you and to me and saying, son, daughter, Jesus says, trust me. You want

someone who'll make promises to you that will never let you down? Trust me, Jesus says. Now, listen to me. I'm not asking you this morning to trust a priest. I'm not asking you to trust a preacher. I'm asking you to trust the person of God's own Son. Put your hand into the hand of the man who made the cosmos and trust him. Why can you trust him? Well, our text gives us three reasons. His Word alone can give us hope in our despair. His Word alone can call us back from the grave. His Word alone can bring us home to God. First of all, His Word alone can give us hope in our despair. That's the theme of this passage, the Word of Christ. Now, a quick orientation to John 2 and 4. We're in the middle of the Cana passage in John's Gospel, the Cana narrative. It began in chapter two, verse one, at the wedding of Cana, and it ends here at Cana of Galilee again, verse 46. It's a Cana narrative. And the whole theme of the Cana narrative is the emptiness of a Christless Judaism. In one sense, Judaism had it all. Remember, Jesus said to the woman at Samaria, we Jews, we worship what we know, but you worship what you don't know, for salvation is of the Jews. And the whole thrust of the Old Testament, the whole thrust of Judaism, was to lead the Jews to look through their religion, looking for a savior who would come, Messiah who would come, who would rescue them from their sins. But rather than looking through their religion to the Messiah, the Jews began looking to their religion, the rites, the rubrics, the rituals, the smells and the bells. And all they were left with was old, stinking wine and old, cracked wineskins. And if you read through John 2 to 4, you'll see Christ is constantly pointing that out. You've got the old water of cleansing at the wedding of Cana. You can wash your hands in it, but you can't wash away your sins with it. You've got the old temple, a building, but fill it with the business of the world. And you can go to church there, but you can't find God there. And then you've got the old teaching from the great teachers like Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel. But he doesn't understand the A, B, Cs of religion. Without Christ, it's all old and dead. But what a difference Christ makes. He offers new wine and new wineskins, the new wine of cleansing that will wash you right down to the bottom of your soul. He offers you a new temple, not a building, but his broken body butchered outside Jerusalem on a Roman gibbet between two thieves, raised again on the third day, delivered over because of our transgressions, raised because of our justification. That's the place you go to meet God. A new temple, you get a new birth. that will open your eyes and will revive your soul and you'll see and enter the kingdom of heaven. You've got a new bronze

serpent lifted up in the wilderness, a sign of judgment that if you look upon this sign of the judgment of God, the serpent or the cross, you'll escape the judgment of God. And you've got a new way of worshiping. in spirit and in truth, for God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth. The newness Christ brings. And then you come to this moment at the end of John 4 of remarkable irony, right, with this town in Samaria. Listen to me, young people. They receive no miracles. They didn't see a dead man rise from the dead. They didn't see a blind man see again. They didn't hear a deaf man hear again. They simply saw a woman, the worst woman in their town, have her history told back to her by Christ. And she came, and she believed, and she witnessed, and the town came, and they heard Jesus for themselves. And they believed because of his word. Verse 41, and many more believed because of his word. They didn't need a wonder. They needed only the word. And so Christ comes down into Cana of Galilee. And we're told the reason he came down was to demonstrate the principle that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown. And the people welcomed him, but they welcomed him not because of what they heard. They welcomed him because of what they saw. They saw his wonders. Oh, but they needed his words. And so enter this rich man. He's got a problem. His wife and he do not know what to do. Their little boy's dying. They've watched his fever rise. They've watched the sweat on his brow. His breathing become increasingly labored through the day. The death rattle has set in. Husband, I imagine, didn't want to go. Too much loss of face for him to go to Jesus. He's the ruler. Maybe an official in Herod's household. He's got so much to lose, and he doesn't want to go. But his wife says, listen, if you don't go now, our little boy is going to die. And so he gets up and he goes. It's a day's walk. He walks all day, I imagine, all night to get to Cana and Galilee. And he comes to Jesus. J.C. Ryle says, the rich have afflictions as well as the poor. Money is not almighty. Silks and satins often cover heavy hearts. Money can banish your debts and your rags, but it cannot banish sickness, sin, and death. Gold and silver are better suited to sinking you into the sea of trouble than they are to lifting you out of it. And as we see this man in his sorrow, it begs the question, what will you do when you get to a place where money can't help you? Where will you go? Who will you trust? Oh, come to Jesus. His word can give us hope in our despair. So the man comes to Jesus, and you can sense the rising panic in the Greek. It says literally, he went to him, verse 47, and was asking him, the continual

tense. The word for ask is very strong. It kind of carries the connotation of beg. He was begging him, was begging him. One beg after another. He's on his knees clawing at Christ saying, please, I need you. We need your help. Our son's dying. Our son's dying. Will you come? He's at the point of death. And Christ's answer seems at first glance to be remarkably insensitive. So Jesus said to him, he's not speaking to the crowds. Commentators try and say he was speaking to the crowd. No, he's speaking to this man and through this man to the crowds. Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. He's exposing behind this man, these people, these Jews, unlike the Samaritans, they want wonders when what they really need are words. They're willing to receive Christ gladly because they see his miracles, but they're honoring him as a miracle worker, but not as a prophet, which is why Christ says, a prophet has no honor in his own hometown. And what this man needs, this man needs more than his son's life back again. This man needs his son's salvation, and his own salvation, and his family's salvation. And for that, he needs more than an earthly wonder. He needs the words of God, because what he needs is faith. And the Bible says, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. And so the official responds, and it's so tender. Come down, and he speaks in the diminutive, before my little boy dies. Now notice the worldview here. Come back with me. In his mind, Jesus has got to be there in the room with his son to effect the healing. The hand's got to go on. Whatever magical power Christ has, it's got to be right there in the room. or the boy won't be healed. But what we're dealing with here is a savior whose word can travel through space and time, from one side of the galaxy to the other. And when he speaks, it is done. And when he commands, everything holds fast. Darkness turns to light. Emptiness turns to fullness. Death turns to life. Come down, the man says. What does Jesus do? He gives him a word, a mere word for his soul to hold on to. Jesus said to him, go. Your son will be just fine. Your son will live. Notice the next verse. The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. He went back home. There was something about Jesus, the majesty of his being, the poise of his character, And the power of his word that when Jesus said, go, your son will live, it seemed to resonate at the heart of this man's soul. Jesus speaks and it is done. And the man went home with only a word to cling on to. No wonder, yet, had to believe the word before he got to the wonder. But he went home in faith, trusting the word. And I'm telling you, why trust Jesus this morning? Because Jesus alone, boys and boys, young people, listen to me now a second, give me your ears. There'll be times in your life, you're young yet, life's very simple, it's not that complicated, your mom and dad pay all the

bills, you're all sorted out, it's great, as long as you go to school, get reasonable grades, everything's fine, a goal or a touchdown on the sporting pitch would be nice, but life is pretty simple at your age. But it's not always gonna be like that, and there'll be times in your life before you, sooner than you might like to think, when things are going to get pretty tough and pretty complicated and you're going to feel at the end of your tether. And you might even feel like you want to despair and you think you've got nowhere to turn to. Listen to me now. Jesus has a word that can reach down. There is no pit in life so deep that his word can't get there and lay hold of you and pull you out of it. His word can turn you back from despair if you listen to it and trust it. That's the first thing. Second thing, and more briefly, his word can call us back from the grave. Jesus says, go, your son will live. And the clock strikes one, which was seven back in those days, because it starts at 6 AM, but it's 1 PM. And the man goes on his way. And as he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. So he asked them. That's interesting. The day before, all he wanted to know was his son would be well. If something's happened in this man's heart, if he'd been the old man coming, that would have been enough. My son's better, praise the Lord. He might not even have said that. He would have just gone home and hugged his son. But he's on his way back to his house and the servants meet him and they say, son, man, your son, his fever's broken, the death rattle's gone, he's sitting up in bed, he's outside with his brothers and sisters playing ball in the front yard, just broke the living room window. But that's okay, we'll forgive him that. And the day before, that's all he wanted to hear, but now this man's a believer. And faith always seeks more understanding, and he wants more information. So he asked them the hour when he began to get better. And they said to him, yesterday at the seventh hour, the fever left him. And the father knew that was the hour when Jesus said to him, your son will live. And he himself believed. Christ has the power to pull you back from the grave. I said to the Baumgartners this morning, this is never a text I would have picked to preach had I known that you were going through the crisis that's happened this week, the tragedy. I would never have been so insensitive to preach a text about Jesus healing a child, raising a child from near death, when you've just seen your child go through death. What happened? Did Jesus succeed on this day and did he fail this week with Ella Baumgartner? What gives? Well, of course, Jesus, his miracles were special moments of history to show you what he could do and one day what he will do at the end of time, when he speaks with the voice like the sound of many waters and the graves

disengage themselves of all of the dead who've died through all of the ages. But Jesus didn't raise everyone who died. His disciples all died. He didn't stop them from dying. And scholars tell us, if you notice when you read the Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Joseph is never again mentioned after the birth narratives, which means it's almost certain that Joseph died when Jesus was a young lad. And he wasn't allowed to raise his own father from the dead. That Jesus remembers the time when his mommy came to him and said, Son, daddy's dead. And the pain of it, and the sorrow. He who wept at the grave of Lazarus, don't you think he wept at the grave of his own father? He knows the sorrow of death.

He came to die the weight of all our deaths. And so while he permits his people to experience bereavement and sin and death and sickness, we ought not to doubt that while our circumstances are different from this family in Judea, Christ is not different. He's the same forever and a day. Yesterday, today, and forever.

And when he speaks, everything changes. And when you have nothing but a word from Jesus to cling on to, you have everything that you need to cling on to. All of the promises of God are yea and amen in Jesus Christ. What do you need this morning, Christian? There's something in the Word for you. Are you discouraged about your future? The word says, I know the thoughts I think toward you, thoughts of peace, not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Do you feel guilt wrapping itself around you and shame? Your lawless deeds and your transgressions, I will remember no more. Are you concerned about your own life, your own death? Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life. He who lives and believes in me, though he die, yet will he live. His word has the power to give us hope in our despair and to call us back from our graves and to bring us home to our God. Briefly at the end, you see that he himself believed and all his household. He went to Jesus looking for a miracle, a wonder. He wanted a dead boy to live. He came back with better than

a miracle. A lost boy and a lost household were saved. He believed he and his household. And we see this again and again in the New Testament. When salvation comes to a man, it comes to his house. Not that every member of that house is converted, but that salvation will be in that house until Christ returns from the grave. on the last day. Oh, children, never, never, never,

ever doubt or take for granted the blessings of growing up in a Christian household where the name of God is sought in prayer and the praise of God is sung around the table and the Word of God is read in your ears. We look down upon our elders. We think about our elders today. I was reading this week in Carl Truman's wonderful new book, Crisis of Confidence, which is fantastic. But anyway, he talked about his mother's house in England.

And it's this little weaver's cottage built in the 17th century, small wee house. And in the fireplace, there's two slots for the weaver's loom to go in. Way back then, on a cold day, the weaver could do his thing and weave the cotton or the silk into a garment. And Carl Truman imagined in his mind's eye how the children would come in and learn from their daddy how clothes were made, how garments were made, back and forth they would learn. And they would learn as elders passed down the information to the next generation. And he said, in that same cottage today, he said, I was trying to set up a DVR for my mother. They had all the instructions out, and they had the batteries and the remote control, trying to program it, and it wasn't working, and it was driving me crazy. And the rugby match was about to start. It was all a nightmare. And my niece, my teenage niece, 13-year-old, walks in and goes, rolls her eyes. Oh, Carl, give it to me. She takes it, presses three buttons. It's all fixed. Everything is working. The rugby match is controlled. She rolls her eyes again, walks out of the room. And Carl said, in that moment, I saw the difference of the ages. In the previous ages, wisdom was passed down from the fathers to their children. Now, technology has reversed that. The old men can't figure out what Snapchat is. Last time we saw Streak was back in our college days. One of our friends took off all their clothes and ran across a football pitch. But no idea, right? And it's so easy for young people to look down upon your parents. But just because technology might make better computers tomorrow doesn't mean that the wisdom of the ages no longer matters and is no longer true. You'll not find that from Apple

or Microsoft. You'll find it from your father and your grandfather and your great-grandfather as they open the word of God to you and read it to you. Because this book contains the words of Christ. And I can call you back from despair. I can call you back from the grave. And I can bring you home to God as individuals and as your families. There's no book like it. And there's no savior like it. Who can you trust this morning? You can trust Jesus. And he'll never let you down when you do. His Word is true. Like silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times, He keeps it through time and eternity. What are your burdens this morning, Jesus says? Give them to Me. What are your troubles? Give them to Me. What are your sins? Give them to Me. and let me bear them. Cast your burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain you. Let's pray together. Father in heaven, we thank you for Jesus. He's beautiful, he's glorious, he's everything we need, everything we yearn for, oh Lord. And he fixes not just our environment, he'll come back and he'll make all things new, but he must make us new first through his word. We pray this

morning, oh God,
that word will live in our hearts. You'll teach us and our children
and our children's children to trust it through time and eternity. For Jesus' sake
we pray, amen.