

Our God and our Father, you've said, my man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God. We pray this afternoon, O Lord, as we turn to your word, that you will speak to us. You will give us eyes to see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God that shines full in the face of Jesus. Perhaps some this morning, for the first time, O God, open their eyes and show them your glory, that they might believe in Jesus. Help us all, O Lord, to grow

in our hearts' willingness to submit to Him. We might take every thought captive to His knowledge. We offer these prayers in Jesus' name. Amen. If you would, please turn with me in your copy of the Word of God to John's Gospel chapter 5 and verse 30. And we are in the middle of a

section where Christ has just claimed equality with God. The Jews were angry. He healed a man that had been sick thirty-eight years, you remember, a cripple. by the pull of Bethesda, and Christ healed him, and bid him carry his mat home, and as the man did so, the Pharisees were angry at the man, and then became angry with Jesus, because he was breaking the Sabbath day, healing on the Sabbath, and also carrying a mat on the Sabbath, which is one of their no-nos. And Jesus justifies that by claiming equality with God, which is an outrageous claim in those days, and the Pharisees now come and try to kill him, and Jesus is giving testimony to his identity as not only the Son of Man, the Messiah, but also the Son of God. Please listen carefully. This is the Word of God. "'I can do nothing on my own,' Jesus said. "'As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will. but the will of him who sent me. If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. There's another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth, not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John, for the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me, his voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you. For you do not believe the one whom he has sent. search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me. Yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people or from men, but I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you did not receive me. If another comes in his own name,

you'll receive him. How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you, Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would have believed me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? Amen. The grass withers and the flower

falls off. But the word of God endures forever. Well, if you've been following John's gospel, John chapter 5, you have heard Christ make quite outrageous claims about himself. Here's a man claiming to be equal with God. And when the Jews not only persecuted him for saying that, but then came out and said, we're going to kill you for saying that, for committing blasphemy, Jesus, rather than sidestepping, rather than walking back his words and saying, I spoke too much, I misspoke, or you misunderstood me, Jesus doubles down on his claim and essentially says, you can know that I am equal with God because of the works that I am doing, the works that I have been doing since the creation of the world. My father, he said, is working until now, and I am working. In other words, my father has

been working on Sabbath days since the beginning of time, and he didn't take a day off. The universe would cease to exist. He's been upholding the universe, guiding the universe, caring for his people in the universe. God's been doing all those things. He is working, and not only God, but I am also working, Jesus says. I'm working alongside my father, doing the things only God could do. That's how you know I'm equal with God. And then he says, not only what

I have been doing until now, what I am doing this moment, Jesus says, by my word, I'm giving life to a dying world, a world of dying souls or dead souls in dying bodies. And that's also a significant claim. And you can read about that more in Ephesians 2 this afternoon if you want to go and read there. about the reality of human beings. We are not sick, we are dead in our sins and trespasses, and only Christ can give us life. And Christ further underscores his equality with God by not just looking back and looking now, but looking forward to the last great day when his word will disengage the tombs of all the dead who have ever died. Those who have done good will be risen to a resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to a resurrection of judgment, Jesus says. Now, those are outrageous claims. Why should you believe them? Why should you believe them? Well, there are many atheists will say, you know, religion is the problem of the masses. It's just to make you feel better when you die, right? Well, the problem with that, of course, that's assuming there is no God. It's a big assumption to make. But if you assume there is a God, atheism is open to the same charge. It's the problem of the masses while they live. assuring themselves there is

no God and there is no judgment to come. It just depends where you begin with the assumption. You've got to be careful what you assume, lest you make an asset of you or me, as someone famously said. Assumptions are dangerous. But many people assure themselves there is no God. And say it's all down to the evidence. Bertrand Russell, the famous atheist, the British writer, scholar, was famously asked, what would you say if you died? And lo and behold, you woke up and you found there was a God. And he was asking you, why did you not believe in me? And Russell said, not enough evidence. You didn't give me enough evidence. Maybe that's your argument today.

not as members of this church, maybe a visitor, or maybe someone here who does not yet share our faith, and you think to yourself, there's not enough evidence to persuade me to be a Christian, but yet you're here. And Christ this morning, it wants to take you head on, as it were. It wants to challenge you. I want to say to you that evidence

is not really the problem. Let's be honest, that's the first point he'll make. And the second point is the real problem, the heart of the problem, is the problem of your heart and your posture toward God, your stubborn resistance of God, your refusal of God, your refusal to come to God, to trust His Word. And until you trust His Word, there are some things you will never understand. As Anselm famously said, *credu*

*ut in telegam*, I believe in order to understand. Our generation puts it back to front. We want to be sure, understand, and then we'll believe. That's not how faith works. Faith opens the doors of the mind. It doesn't close them. And until you open your mind to God and faith, there are some things you will never understand. Let's work through the text this morning. The first thing we see is evidence

is not the problem. Evidence is not the problem.

Jesus Christ invites you into the courtroom. He invites you to sit on the judge's seat and to be the judge of God. When I was a young boy back in Northern Ireland, I went to Hillsborough Castle, which is one of the royal residences. Friends of ours were gatekeepers there, and we got led into the inner sanctum, into the throne room. And I, as a wee four-year-old boy, got to climb up onto the throne and sit. Don't tell anyone. You'll get in trouble, or I'll get in trouble. But I got to sit on the throne. Well, this morning, you get to sit on the throne of judgment and judge God to see, is there evidence to believe in his son? And Jesus straight out of the gate says, I alone, if I alone, verse 31, bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. Now Christ is not saying here that he doesn't have an authority of witness to give on the matter. He's saying one of two things.

He's either saying, if I was the only one speaking like those crazy people in the mental institution who say that they are God, or Moses, or Elijah, or some other outlandish claim, you could write me off as a crazy person, but I'm not the only one speaking.

That's one way of reading his words. The other way is to think he's actually speaking to the Jews, because the Jews in their Jewish court system would not accept a claim of evidence in the court of law except on the basis of two or three witnesses. And Christ is going to give us

four witnesses here in this passage to prove that his testimony is valid. And the first witness is God

the Father. See that there in verse 31, or

sorry, verse 32. There is another who bears witness

about me, and I know that the witness or the testimony that

he bears about me is true. Most scholars believe, there

are some who believe that's kind of an intro to verse 33, which

is clearly about John the Baptist. But if Jesus had met John the

Baptist in verse 32, or meant him, he would have said John

then, I think. Verse 32 is more obtuse and more mysterious. The one who bears

witness about

Jesus, I know that his testimony that he bears about me is true.

Most scholars, I think, correctly believe that refers to God the

Father. And all the other witnesses flow from God the Father. John

the Baptist is the prophet God the Father sent. The miracles

that Christ does are the miracles that the Father sent Him to do.

The scriptures the Jews have searched into, these are scriptures

that God the Father has written through the Spirit by His Son,

or by His Son, no, through His Son by the Spirit. Getting my

opera ad intra back to front. Anyway. So the first testimony

is the father, and Jesus knows his witness is true. Now, of course, that witness

came verbally at Christ's baptism and at the transfiguration. This

is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, the father said.

But you all have heard the father's voice in creation. and in your

conscience since the earliest moments of your existence. It's

God's voice surrounds you. It comes at you from all directions. One of our elders

this morning

in our prayer time quoted, this is my father's world. The birds,

their carols raise. The morning light, the lily white,

declare their maker's praise. This is my father's world. He

shines in all that's fair. In the rustling grass, I hear

him pass. He speaks to me everywhere, the

Father's witness. And so, you've heard, it's like

handwriting. I heard a story recently about

this, true story, about this drug addict who came to the pharmacy

with a prescription for heroin. prescription medications that

we shouldn't have had. And the pharmacy looked at the

letter and immediately knew it was fake because the handwriting

was too good to be a doctor's. It is true. The man had stolen the pad from

the DPs that day when they refused him. He brought it home, he did

research online to get the dosage right, how they would write it

right, but he just wrote it too well. We recognize someone's handwriting. And you've

heard the voice of

God in creation. You've seen it. A family member

once said to me, I'd believe in God if he showed me his glory

in the heavens. And of course, the answer was, look up. He has shown you his glory in the heavens. Where are these wondrous northern lights we've been watching these last few days? Where do they come from? Who paints them onto the heavens? It doesn't look like a very random product of a meaningless explosion. It's the glory of God. And you've seen God's glory in the heavens. You've seen God's glory. You've heard God's word in your heart, your conscience. So when you read the Bible, there's a wonderful story about the son of Hamas, who was the son of the head of Hamas. And he was converted in Jerusalem when an American tourist gave him the Bible, New Testament. He went back to his room that night, opened his New Testament up to Matthew's gospel. You have heard that it was said to those of old, Love your neighbor, but hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemy and pray for him. And this man, a Muslim, said, the light of nature rose up inside me and convinced me this is the voice of God. Allah says, hate your enemy and kill him. Jesus says, love your enemy and pray for him. And I just knew it was the voice of God. It came at him. He knew it. He'd heard this voice before in his conscience. So the witness, number one, is the witness of the Father. Witness number two is John the Baptist. Verse 33, you sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. Jesus is saying, I don't need John's testimony. But I'm condescending to use it to remind you that there was a time when John came and preached to you. And people came from Judea and Jerusalem and Samaria, and they came from all over the place to hear him. And the Pharisees and the Sadducees sent out to find out what on earth was going on. Who is this John guy? What's all this malarkey he is saying? And you can read about that in John chapter 1. And Jesus says here, rejoiced. He was a burning and shining light, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light." He went out to John and heard him say, I am not the Christ, not Elijah, not the one that Moses spoke of. I'm a voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said. I baptize you with water, but among you stands one whom you do not know, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to loose, and he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit of God. And I have seen and I have borne witness that this is the Son of God, John said. And the Jews, for a while, rejoiced. They believed in Messiah. They had this sense it could just be the prophet sent, the Elijah prophet sent, to come and prefigure the coming of Christ. But their joy in John lasted only for a while. Why did they lose interest in him? Well, it's not hard to see. Because as the Pharisees went out and John was calling all these dirty sinners to repentance, And the Pharisees were going,

oh good, all these, you know, unclean people, they need to be cleaned up before they come to God. Quite right, John, preach on, John. And then John looked at the Pharisees and said, they aren't the only dirty sinners here who need to repent. You also need to repent, oh Pharisee. You brood of vipers. He's calling them the seed of the serpent, Satan's children. the seed of the serpent? You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, who do you think you're speaking to? We're the children of Abraham. And John says, do not presume to say to yourselves, we have Abraham as our father. For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. It's cut down and thrown into the fire. That's a tough, tough moment. As John comes and warns these Pharisees, notwithstanding all of the religion, they need to be saved. They need to be cleansed, just like any other dirty sinner. They need to repent. And it's like that scene in the children's storybook Bible when Naaman is told to go wash in the waters of the Jordan. And he's annoyed. That's a very unimpressive thing to ask such an impressive man to do to get cleanse of his leprosy. And his servant said, what are you expecting to say? Climb Everest or do something? Run about naked in this hard desert? He told you to go and get washed in the River Jordan. Do it." And there's a wee footnote in the Children's Storybook Bible. It says, all Naaman needed was nothing, but nothing is the one thing most men don't have. And the Pharisees were offended that Jesus spoke to them as if they were sinners, and all they needed was nothing. no works of their own, no credit of their own, no reputation of their own, no standing of their own, but simply Christ alone. To approach God as a sinner in need of grace, all they needed was nothing, and that was the one thing, nothing, that they didn't have. Be willing to come to God, but with nothing. Not your reputation, not your money, not your learning, not your righteousness, but simply your sins and Jesus. So the second testimony, first was the Father, the second was John, the third is Christ's miracles. Jesus says in verse 36, but the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me." Now, it's important to realize the function miracles have in the life of a prophet, right? We don't believe someone because they can do wonders. Satan can do wonders. The Antichrist can do wonders and will do wonders. For those who perish because

they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved, Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2. So miracles by themselves are not enough, but when a prophet arises preaching the word of God in truth, a new prophet with new revelation, men like Moses, Elijah, Elisha, God in the Old Testament gave them miracles, just like you put the sign before the corner, not after the corner, to warn people there's a change of direction coming up. God gave a prophet giving a new word, a new direction, and he gave signs to authenticate that this man really had come from God. And the Bible treats the miracles of Christ that way. Like, for example, in Peter's sermon on Pentecost morning, or afternoon morning, men of Israel hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know. This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. You crucified and killed him by the hands of wicked men. But the miracles were attested. There was God's work through Jesus showing he was a prophet sent from God. Same thing was Hebrews 2, verse 3. How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. These are attesting miracles. Now, it's important to note, right, the Pharisees never, ever contest that Christ did miracles. They never bring the paralyzed man out and say, he's a charlatan. This guy's been, you know, like Eddie Murphy in Trading Places. He pretended to be a cripple, but he wasn't really. He was totally fine when he went home. We've got pictures of him walking about his apartment, right? They never contested that Christ did miracles. They contested how he did miracles. You remember Nicodemus comes, not Nicodemus, that's a later point, but the Pharisees come and they say that you did these things by the power of the devil, but they never ever cast aspersions on the fact that Christ did miracles. Nicodemus comes in John 3, 3, as we said before, Teacher, we know that you're a teacher come from God, for no man can do the things that you are doing unless God is with him." Now, maybe you're here this morning and you say, well, you know, miracles? We know miracles don't happen. Well, how do you know miracles don't happen? Science. Well, how does science prove there's no miracles? Unless you're buying into that particular view of science, let's call it scientism, which is the worship of science. And that view says that all truth, all that is useful truth, all objective truth, must be scientifically verifiable. And that sounds very kind of cogent, intelligent, PhD-worthy, you know. You've got to prove to me scientifically that it's true before I believe

it. The problem is, do you see that statement doesn't even stand by its own measure? How would you scientifically verify that all truth must be scientifically verifiable? What do you mean? Well, what if there's a world beyond this world, a world beyond science, a spirit world where God exists? and where the angels live, and the demons live, and the devil lives, and the spirits of just men who are made perfect live, and the spirits of the wicked damned were there consigned until the resurrection. What if it was a spirit world beyond this world? How would you verify its existence? The electron microscope can't go there. Your slide rule can't reach there. You can't bring your scales there, your measuring rods there. You can't bring your microphones there to hear the voice of God. It's beyond the reach of science by definition. And the scientist who worships science simply assumes such a world doesn't exist and then proudly declares it doesn't exist. But he's got no scientific evidence for it, because such evidence cannot exist. It'd be like asking a deaf man to hear light, or a blind man to see sound. He hasn't got the instrument for it. and neither does the scientist. And yet that's precisely the worldview I'm preaching to you this morning. And it's precisely the worldview that men and women of every nation, tribe, and tongue throughout this world, throughout human history, all across this world, you will never find a tribe, no matter how immature in their lifestyle, who doesn't have some conception of God and the spirit world beyond this life. It takes a special kind of pride and the kind of ignorance you have to learn by hard study to deny what all men know to be true, that this spirit realm exists beyond this world, and it's more real than this world. And Christ's miraculous power, you know, even people who say miracles don't happen, miracles only make no sense in a world without God. But if you assume God, as C.S. Lewis said, miracles are not just possible, they are to be expected. Are they not? And Christ's miracles prove His deity. Also the Scriptures. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me, his voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness about me." The Jews famously loved the Bible. I was in a flight once across the Atlantic some years ago on the way back to seminary in the early aughties, and I sat behind a rabbi. He had the prayer shawl on with the white and blue stripes on it, and the tassels, and for the whole seven hours of the flight, apart from the one trip he went to the restroom, and the time he spent eating his kosher meal, he spent the rest of the seven hours reading and studying the Torah and the Talmud and his commentaries. The Jews are famous



for their love of Scripture. They made it a mathematical art. They counted every letter in the Bible. They knew the middle letter of the whole Old Testament. They knew the middle letter of every book in the Old Testament. And they knew the middle letter of every verse in the Old Testament. And that helped them measure the accuracy of each copy. When the scribe copied the Bible, there was a rule. He couldn't write one letter from memory. The Lord, in English. T, check, H, check, E. You couldn't just look, oh, the, and write T-H-E. You had to check every letter to make sure you didn't make a mistake. They were neurotic about it. Hillel, the famous Jewish scholar who helped produce the Talmud, he lived around the time of Christ and the apostles. He famously was speaking about,

you can have too much of anything except the Bible. You can never have too much of the Bible. He says, and I quote, more flesh, more worms, more wealth, more care, more maidservants, more lewdness, more manservants, more thieving, More woman, more witchcraft. More Torah, more life. And perhaps Christ is quoting Hillel. More Torah, more life. The more of the Bible you have, the more life you have. And Jesus says, you search the Bible, because you think that in them you have eternal life, and yet it is they that bear witness about me. They studied the Bible. They loved the Bible. But their study of the Bible didn't lead them to Christ. This amazing book, The Four Witnesses, God the Father, John the Baptist, the miracles of Christ, and the scriptures. So Christ says the evidence is there for the Jews to see all around them. What's the problem then? And Jesus says, the heart of the problem isn't outside you. The heart of the problem is inside you. The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. He says to them, though you search the Scriptures, you do not approach the Scriptures through faith. The Father who sent me is born witness about me, his voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you." Why? For you do not believe the one whom he has sent. Notice what he says, you do not have his word abiding in you. Why? Not because you don't read it often enough, but because you don't read it through the lens of faith in Christ. That's an amazing statement. You can read the Bible to the cows come home, but if you read the Bible outside of faith in Christ, it'll never make sense to you. You might be able to understand the sentences and the words, but the reality will forever escape you. There will be some truths that will forever elude you until you lay down your rebellion and trust in Jesus. Well, why didn't they believe the Bible? Well, because Jesus says they were caught up with man and not with God. Verse 41, I do not receive glory from man, literally, but I know that you do not have the love of God within

you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you'll receive him. How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" Jesus says, I do not receive glory from men. I'm not excited by that crisis. I'm not attracted by that. It's not what grips me and grabs me. But the Pharisees aren't like that. They're caught up with man and the things of men. How can you believe when you

receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? The Pharisees were so caught up with the weightiness of man. When they prayed, they're going to the temple and they couldn't get there in time, and they stop on the street corner at the stop sign waiting for the little man to go green, and they're praying to God in loud prayers. A mother turns to her child and says, see that man, he really fears God. Listen to the way he prays. Isn't that a wonderful prayer? And the man, the Pharisee's heart is, his mind is just puffing up. He's believing his own PR. I'm a godly man. Everyone thinks

I'm a wonderful prayerer. And he's so caught up with men. And what do men think of me?

How do men regard me? There's no room in his mind.

There's no room in his heart. for the mind and the heart and

the love of God. I do not receive glory from men,

Jesus says, but I know that you do not have the love of God within

you. I come in my Father's name, you

don't receive me. If another man comes, a scribe

comes in his own name, you'll receive him. And the reason is, of course,

because you want to. But the ultimate reason, the

ultimate reason why the Jews don't come to Christ is

their posture. They read the Bible without faith

in Jesus. They're caught up with man and the praise of men. But

the ultimate reason is they don't want to. Verse 40. And the New King James is helpful

here. The Greek literally says, you

are not willing to come to me that you might have life. You

are not willing to come to me. I'll end here this morning. You

know, we live in a culture that worships the human will. and choice. One of my mentors,

Bob Godfrey, many of you may know Dr. Godfrey with his work

through Ligonier. He said this, not me. I'm from

Northern Ireland, okay, so I didn't say this. This is Dr. Godfrey.

You can persuade an American of anything

if you promise them liberty. Freedom of choice. Take a starving

peasant from some backwoods in a third world country, his tummy

bloated, take him into our supermarkets to the dog food department. And

there's dog food as far as the eye can see in the aisle, just

so the pet owners can have a choice. Go into the Starbucks or the

coffee shop when you were 60 years ago, back in the 60s, you

had two choices, black or white, and sugar or no sugar, four choices, three choices, black or white. Now you've got espresso, Americano, drip coffee, blonde, medium, dark roast. Love me some blonde coffee in the mornings. You've got Frappuccino, whatever that is. I mean, the list goes on as long as the cow's tail. Choice. And we'll do some terrible things in the name of choice. In Planned Parenthood, if ever there's an illustration of what gaslighting is, Planned Parenthood. It's saying one thing, meaning another. No, it's not planned parenthood. It's the planned murder of little children, pulling them apart limb from limb. What do we use to justify this crime? A few words is all we need. A woman's right to choose. My body, my choice, Peter Kreeft, who's a Roman Catholic scholar, talks about abortion being the sacrament of Satan, and it's fast becoming the sacrament of America. And it's very insightful. He says, it's an interesting twist by Satan that the words of abortion, to justify abortion, are the very words that Christ uses to explain the Lord's Supper. This is my body. And the analogy doesn't just stop there. This is my body, and it must die in order that I might have life. You must die in order that I might have life. The human will. We'll do anything for independence, for our autonomy, our right to do and be whatever we want. That's the real threat. If you're not a Christian this morning, scrape it all away, get right down to the lick logs. The real reason why you don't come to Christ is because your will comes into contact, into collision with Christ's will, and you will not let him be Lord over your life. You want to be Lord over your life. You will not come to me that you might have life. And Jesus is here saying, I offer you a better way. This is my body, which is broken for you. I must die in order that you must live. Which is a better master, your will or Christ's? So come to Jesus this morning, some for the first time, some for the ultimate time. Maybe there's a woman here. I'm sure there are several. You had an abortion, and my words have torn your heart to ribbons this morning. Jesus says, my life is the answer for the one you took. I died in your place for your sins, to cover them from view, to bear them all away in my body, that you might have forgiveness this morning. I've become the guilt-bearer, the shame-bearer, to bear away the shame, the guilt of all that you have done. It becomes mine, that you might be credited with all of my righteousness. It becomes yours. Let's pray together. Father in heaven, we thank you for Jesus' astounding mercy to us. We pray this morning that you will come and you will Persuade us, O God, of His glory, the truth of His life, His ministry, and grant, O God, that You will take my words and bring them home to

each heart here this morning. For Jesus' sake, we pray, deliver us from our autonomy and make us willing in the day of Your power. For Jesus' sake, amen.