

A Text I Can't Preach
John 7:53-8:12
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 8. How are you guys hearing in the back? A little questionable? Okay. This room normally is so loud on Wednesday nights, isn't it? The sound just bouncing everywhere. We put the red chairs to deaden that, but I think it may have also made it a little weaker on the proclamations. So I'm going to raise my voice so you folks on the front just kind of be prepared for that. We've got to get it back to the back too. We have no speakers in here. The sound is recording, but there are no speakers, so there's no amplification. So we took the old-fashioned way, just be loud. Think about how the great preachers of the past would address thousands of people without any amplification. Amazing! Power preaching, the foolishness of the message preached, as we read earlier from 1 Corinthians 1.

John 8 is our passage this morning. We're turning into a new chapter. Today is actually my son Jonathan's 21st birthday and I was thinking about the significance of that, and thinking over the past, and since he was born. We were talking about when he was born in Birmingham back in 1991, and thinking back through life. Then in preparing for this message today, I was thinking about how so much time passes and something comes, and today we come to a message that is completely unique in all of my ministry. It's been over 19 years of preaching, and we come to a familiar passage which leads us ironically to an unfamiliar subject. The passage before us, John 7:53-8:11, is one of the more familiar passages in the Bible. A couple of our sayings that are almost cliché, "Go and sin no more," and, "I don't want to be the first one to cast a stone," come from this passage. But it puts me in a situation which I've never been in before, a situation that is extremely rare because the circumstances of this text are so rare. I'm charged to preach the Word of God, the whole counsel of God's Word, but this passage, though it's familiar, I don't believe is a part of God's Word.

John 7:53-8:11, if you look in your Bibles, if you have an NASB, or an ESV, or an NIV, you're going to see brackets around the text. If you have a study Bible, even if you don't, sometimes there will be a note in the margin. In the study Bible there will be a note down below telling you that most of the early manuscripts did not have this passage. John 7:53-8:11. We read the last words of John 7:52 when the Pharisees were saying to Nicodemus:

John 7:52 ~ ...“You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.”

Then you have the brackets, and you’ll have this passage:

John 7:53 ~ [Everyone went to his home.

John 8:1-11 ~ But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2 Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. 3 The scribes and the Pharisees *brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, 4 they *said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?” 6 They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. 7 But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” 8 Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. 10 Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” 11 She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.”]

That is in many ways a wonderful story and it’s thought by many scholars to probably, in accurate oral tradition, that this probably happened. It was probably told by the apostles verbally and then later inserted back into the text of John. I mean this story has some beautiful elements. It certainly shows the Pharisees doing something that we see them often doing in the other synoptic gospels, trying to trap Jesus. They bring Him a woman caught in adultery and there are all kinds of bad things about the way they’re acting. If they’re really trying to be so faithful to the law, where is the man? That’s what Deuteronomy says, “The man and the woman should be stoned.” Where is the man? But they’re not really interested in doing the law, they don’t practice that. They’re interested in trapping Jesus on the horns of a dilemma. They want Him to choose between contradicting Moses or undermining Roman authority. If He says she needs to be stoned, then He’s the One Who is calling for an execution against Roman law. The Jews didn’t have the authority to execute anyone. But Jesus preaches grace. He doesn’t say adultery is not wrong, He says, “Go and sin no more.” He shows us that God is ready to forgive, and in

fact we saw this in the Old Testament. A careful reading of the Old Testament would show you that the penalties for adultery and the penalties for the other sins that were given to Israel were given largely to teach us about the seriousness of sin. They weren't always to be carried out. Case in point, David was an adulterer and a murderer. Why did God not kill him? Because God is a God of grace. So part of the reason we had those laws given, and they were carried out in the old covenant to a period of time, but then the Lord begins to transition to show us that every sin deserves death. In fact, the right reading of Deuteronomy, the passage that they're wanting to trap Jesus into is that to condemn somebody, to throw a stone at somebody for a sin, you must not be guilty of that sin ever in your own life. So if you're going to stone an adulterer, you can't be an adulterer. What has Jesus told us in Matthew 5 as the light has gotten brighter in the New Testament? He's told us everybody is an adulterer. If you've lusted in your heart, you're an adulterer. So the reality is, the teaching is, we can't condemn one another, and we should not condemn unbelievers in that sense. We don't stand over them and look down upon them, we all, from the foot of the cross, should be humble and broken, but still proclaim God's truth uncompromisingly. God hates sin. He hates all sin. But He saves from sin. The penalty of sin, eternal wrath, He saves from that, and He also saves from the power of sin.

So you have this beautiful picture but the question is, is this in John's book? And the answer that you see in your margins in your Bible is, "No." There are some who argue that it is, but really the overwhelming evidence among Protestant scholars is that this was not originally in the Gospel of John. I said that this is a familiar passage which leads us to a very unfamiliar kind of message. We're going to talk about text criticism today. I know you woke up this morning thinking, "Man, I hope that we get to hear something about text criticism today. I need something that's going to move my heart." Text criticism is actually called 'lower criticism' because higher criticism is bad. That is where people question if the Bible is really God's Word. Higher criticism is where they think Moses didn't write Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. No, evangelicals, inherentists believe that everything that God says is true, and Moses wrote those books. Jesus tells us that Moses wrote those books. All Old Testament tradition tells us Moses wrote those books. The books themselves tell us Moses wrote those books. We believe the Word of God. God said it, that settles it.

So lower criticism though is the quest for the original text, a text that is as close to the original as possible. The reality is that Genesis through Revelation were written by different men at different times. In fact, that's one of the great proofs of the Bible. More than 40 authors wrote a book over a 1,500 year period. I mean, think

about that. A thousand years in Hebrew, 1,400 to 400, the first 39 books of the Old Testament. Then there is a period of silence where God doesn't send any prophets. The refrain of the Old Testament goes silent. It's like a long, pregnant pause, broken by John the Baptist, and then the light comes on with Jesus, and then the apostles. You have the New Testament written between 40 and 100 A.D, a 60-year period, the last 27 books. But the whole of the Bible is 1,500 years, from 1,400 B.C. to 100 A.D., three different languages, three continents. Men from diverse backgrounds and yet it has one message. Well, they all wrote at different times, and God gave His Word in a very unspectacular way at first glance. Think about this, I thought about this some this week as I was preparing for this sermon, thinking, "Wow, I have a lot of trepidation about having to preach on this." You know? Because I want you to understand, the Bible that you have in your hands, you don't need to doubt. You have great confidence for this book. In fact, make sure you're always looking for the brackets. Now I've got good news for you, there aren't many of those brackets in the Bible. That passage right here is the biggest that we think has kind of been included in the text historically, but we don't think really belongs there.

Another passage like that, the second biggest passage is at the end of Mark. Mark 16:9-20, the ending of Mark, is not original as well. It's pretty obvious there that you've got some really weird things about handling snakes and stuff like that. There is one other passage that you would be familiar with that is not there, and that is the alternative ending to the Lord's Prayer. You know when it says, let's see. I've got to start at the beginning to get there. "Thine is the Kingdom, and Thine is the glory forever and ever," right? That is not in the originals from what we can tell. All the Lord's Prayer up to that point, but they needed a good amen so apparently they added it in somewhere. That's it though. Those are the main three passages in the Bible, okay? Now there are other little variances that come along that don't touch anything. In fact, all of the variances in the Bible don't touch anything significant doctrinally. Nothing significant is touched by these variances.

Now what I want to do is discuss this sermon under three points: The preservation of Scripture, the composition of Scripture, and the proclamation of Scripture. The preservation, composition, and proclamation. What I want you to see, what we're going to see as I pondered this, "Lord, why did You give Your Word in exactly the way that You did?" It's come back to me, this is basically the principle I think you're going to see, that I'm going to try to articulate through this message. When God moves He does so in apparently unspectacular ways, common ways, ordinary ways. But when you look at what is at first glance ordinary, it is extraordinary. He packages incredible treasure in unspectacular packages. Surprising! I mean, isn't

that the way the Lord is? Paul says later in 2 Corinthians, “We have this treasure, the knowledge of the glory of God and the face of Christ. We have this relationship with the living God, this treasure in earthen vessels.” The idea in the 1st Century was that you don’t put anything nice in an earthen vessel.

An earthen vessel is a clay pot. People in that day, they had to use pots. We have to use pots to cook and stuff, but they had to use pots for garbage cans. They didn’t have plastic bags. The garbage man isn’t coming tomorrow. It was a different experience and so they didn’t have plumbing. People in America didn’t have plumbing until the last 100-150 years. I don’t know when it started but it hasn’t been that long. Some people in parts of Alabama still don’t have plumbing. I love Alabama. That’s where my son was born, I said Birmingham, anyway. If you don’t have plumbing though and you have to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night and you have to go in something, and so you go in a clay pot. You never go in a silver, brass, or metal pot. You go in a clay pot. You put the disgusting garbage that you scrape off of the dinner plates, or out of the pot when you scrape it out, because you don’t have a drain to carry it away, you put it in a clay pot. The clay pots are the garbage pots. Paul says, “It’s an amazing way of God that He puts this treasure in clay pots.” You and I look just like everybody else. We’re just a clay pot. We’re just a sinful human being. Look at us from the outside, there’s no treasure in you and me. Not at first glance.

Haven’t you had that experience when you meet somebody and you don’t know they’re a Christian so you’re thinking they are probably not? You’re talking a little bit and you find out they love the Lord, and suddenly there is this connection and you think, “Man, I didn’t even recognize. I saw you in the room and I thought you were the least likely to be a Christian at first.” You don’t usually say that to somebody, but you think that. You were just looking at the outside of a clay pot. It’s always surprising to find treasure in them. What I want to say is God works that way so that the glory may be all His. That’s what He does in the preservation of Scripture, the composition of Scripture, and the proclamation of Scripture. He does it in the most ordinary way. This is one of the reasons He uses clay pots is to put off the proud, people that are looking for the show. People who want to exalt themselves, God confounds by coming in weakness. They’re too sophisticated for the message of Christ. They’re too intellectual for the message of Christ. They think they’re smarter than that and so they had their theories, and in reality professing themselves to be wise, they become fools. It is the foolish who humble themselves and keep looking at the wisdom of God packaged in surprising ways that become wise, and that see the way that God has done it is so incredibly

beautiful, so authentically divine. Man could never have thought to do it the way God did it, so that all the glory is His.

1) The Preservation of Scripture:

So that is the context. I want you to think about this issue of the preservation of Scripture. When God gave His Word, He gave it to all these different people writing on these different materials. Much of the originals were written on parchment. Parchment is leather. It's sometimes called vellum. They've taken animal skin, cleaned it, worked on it, and dried it to where it became a suitable writing material. Then it was turned into a scroll. Or papyrus. We get our English word 'paper' from it but papyrus was the reeds that grew in the Nile River delta. It would be taken, dried out, cut in pieces, and then laid together and formed into a sheet of paper, and then rolled into a scroll. When God spoke, when God breathed His Word, as 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed. All that which is written." That's what it says. Pas graphe. That's the word for Scripture, 'graphe', 'graphic'. All that which is written is God-breathed. He breathed it out on papyrus. He breathed it out on vellum, parchments. He breathed it out on things that we look at and say, "Well that's primitive." But it's the Word of God. It is glorious, but at first glance it is very mundane. This is the way God is. I mean think about His whole deal of how He reveals Himself.

He picks people that aren't that impressive. I mean, the prophets. Take the great people of the Old Testament—Moses. Well Moses would have been killed if not for the sovereignty of God putting him in that basket. The name means 'drawn out of the water'. Remember the Pharaoh's daughter found him? He was more educated. Some of the guys in Scripture are a little more educated. Paul, Moses. Remember what Moses did? He was basically under a death sentence for killing an Egyptian. He flees for His life to the desert and he lives the next 40 years in the desert and when God finds him, what's he doing? He doesn't look so impressive. He's tending sheep in the land of Midian. We have a romanticized view of sheep-herding because none of us know any shepherds. If you have a shepherd in your family, well I can't take that back. Okay, sheep-herding is not that impressive. It never really has been. It's not looked down on today like it was in the past, but throughout history, the shepherds were never the romanticized people. They were the most humble and tended to be looked down upon, and look how many shepherds God pulls into His work. He finds Moses out there and He says, "Moses, you're the one." Remember Moses has a speech defect. "Here am I, send Aaron," was basically his response, right? "Don't send me. I can't speak properly." The

Lord said, “Who made the deaf, the dumb, and the blind? Did not I, the Lord? You think you’re telling me something I don’t know, Moses?”

David. These are the great heroes of the people of Israel. David, what was he? He was a shepherd boy from a nowhere place called Bethlehem. Remember when Samuel went to go find a king, he was going to Bethlehem which is way out of the way, going to a man named Jesse who had seven sons. Jesse didn’t even bother calling David up. “No way can it be David. It’s got to be one of the other six.” Samuel, in fact, thought it must be the number one son, remember? “That’s the guy!” And God said, “No, it’s not.” The Lord has a way of doing that. So He gives His Scripture in surprising ways. Well, He does it in the most human way. He speaks to us. In one sense, He condescends all the way down to us. He makes Himself understandable. He speaks in our language. I mean, He could have given it in some kind of supernatural language. Just think about these kinds of things. The Lord could have spoken something like Klingon, that crazy language that people that are Star Trek people love. They’ve actually created a language apparently from watching a few of those episodes, and they made a language. All right. Well God could have given a supernatural language that was just for the people who had come to know Him. “We’re going to speak in this language, a heavenly language.” But the Lord spoke in everyday Hebrew, and then when they were over amidst the sinners in Babylon He spoke in Aramaic, in their language. Then when He gave the New Testament He gave it Koine Greek, the language of all the people, and not just all the people, but all the common people.

That’s the way the Lord did it and He did it in the same kind of documents they had. I kind of wish, when it came to this passage earlier in the week, I thought it’d be nice if He had just given His Word in gold tablets, the whole Bible. Just had it on display. “There it is. You can’t argue with it. It’s right there.” But the Lord didn’t do that because that’s not His way. His way is to do it in an unspectacular way so that we might really have faith. If you keep looking at it, you will know it’s the Word of God. No other choice. If you come yourself, come to the Word humbly. In fact, Jesus said earlier in Chapter 7, Verse 17, He said, “If anyone is willing to do my Father’s will, he will know that My words are true.” Unbelief is a moral issue. People don’t believe because they don’t want to believe and so God gives it in these unspectacular packages to weed out those who don’t want to believe anyway. It’s like He doesn’t give them more than they need because they are going to reject whatever they get anyway.

So He gives it in scrolls, and those scrolls have to be hand-copied. It wasn’t like God forgot to invent the printing press or the Xerox machine first. He chose to give

it at the time He chose to give it, when it had to be hand-copied. So the Hebrews, the Jews, developed a scribal tradition that was astonishing. They were so meticulous in their copies. In fact, the report of one scribe, who every time he would write as one character, would go and wash himself and come back and sit and write the next letter. This is a holy process and so the preservation of the Bible, though at first glance common, is very uncommon. In fact, let me just talk to you about that. This whole idea of textual criticism is true about every document, every ancient document we have copies of. We don't have the original. We don't have the original of any of the works of Plato or Aristotle. We don't have the original of Homer's Iliad or Odyssey. We have copies. In fact, when you look at the story of text criticism, let me give you an example.

Plato, he wrote probably around 350 B.C., and his works, there is a grand total now of seven copies of his works in the original language. Seven copies. Now none of the copies though were made before 900 A.D. That is 1,250 years after he wrote them, we have a copy that's that close. 1,250 years, a lot of time that copies were made and destroyed. Things get old. If you have paper, I've looked at some of my old college stuff, it doesn't look like it's going to last very long. In some ways our paper isn't as good as what they were using. Certainly not animal skins.

Herodotus, the father of history, a Greek historian, wrote around 450 B.C. the histories. He wrote about the Persians and the countries that were before Babylon, and the greatness of those cities. He wrote in 450 B.C. There are eight copies of his manuscript that we now have in the language that he wrote in, in Greek.

Aristotle wrote in 325 B.C. We have 49 copies. None of the copies of Aristotle are before 1,100 A.D. So there are 1,400 years between when he wrote and when we have them, but there are only 49 of Aristotle.

Homer, he is the one that we have the most copies of anything other than the Bible, and there are 643 copies of Homer. Homer wrote at 900 B.C. and the earliest copy we have, not many but we have one about 400 B.C. So 500 years removed and we have 643 copies, but not all of those are at that time. There are scholars that spend their time looking at these things, and what they're doing is to find out with certitude, what did Homer write? When people copy by hand you can make mistakes. I see that every time I make a grocery list for my wife. Yesterday I made one, writing it. I think I did pretty good actually yesterday, but when I get it on my phone, "Pick up this. Pick up this. Pick up that." I know I did forget one thing yesterday. You got good news, Honey. Just remember. But anyway, it's part of the human experience that we make mistakes, and so there are copying errors. So

scholars analyze the Homer's Iliad and in those 643 copies we have more certitude with what Homer said than we do about Plato and Aristotle because we only have seven or eight copies from those two guys. I mean 20 copies from Aristotle, seven from Plato. Historians, using the cannons of historical research are about 95% sure that the Iliad and the Odyssey are accurate to what Homer wrote because there are 643 copies.

The New Testament, we have a total of 25,000 manuscripts. Six thousand in the original Greek and 19,000 in early languages like Syriac and Coptic, Aramaic. They were written almost contemporaneously with the early Greek being transmitted. Six thousand in Greek and 19,000 in additional languages, all from the first few centuries of the early church. Now when we look at those, in fact, let me just tell you this: We have a copy of the Gospel of John that might have been written between 100 and 150 B.C. I told you when John was written. I think 85, some people think 90 or 95. We know he was living in the 90's. We have a copy of part of his epistle. We have fragments, not only the whole epistle, you'll have a fragment of it. You know, you've got a piece of vellum and it's not big enough for everything. So there's a fragment of it, of the Gospel of John, from about 125. That's just a few decades removed.

And then we have 6,000 in Greek in those first few centuries. Particularly, you really start seeing those manuscripts after about 200 A.D. Just an explosion of them. The real explosion happens after 325 A.D. because remember the early church was being persecuted so they were burning and destroying Christians and their texts. But when Constantine legalizes Christianity, now the copies are legal. So you see a proliferation of manuscripts after 325. By the way, let me just say, we know the Gospel of John was written in the 1st Century because we have a copy of John in the early 2nd Century. So tell Dan Brown that all that nonsense about the Davinci Code is a bunch of nonsense.

So the Lord gives His Word though in a way that has to be copied the same way. At first glance it looks like, "Wow, are we really sure that what we have is there?" But when you have 22,000 manuscripts and you do the research, we have 99.5% assurance that the Bible that you hold in your hands here in English is accurate. 99.5% and in the .5%, nothing of significance is touched by that. This passage in John, as I said, the end of Mark, and then little things here and there. If you watch your footnotes, occasionally you'll see that some manuscripts say it was 'He' in the Greek, some manuscripts say, "Jesus said." Well, we know it was Jesus, he was talking about Jesus, but did the scribe insert Jesus or was it He originally? Most of it is like that and it doesn't matter at all to the flow of the story. In fact, if there are

significant ones I usually bring them up. They don't make quite as much of a big deal out of them as I am today because they don't mean that much.

But the preservation of Scripture is astonishing. When you look at it, you see the hand of God governing the preservation of His Word. In fact, it's one of the beautiful things that happened in history because they're the higher critics. I was talking about the bad criticism, higher criticism where they try to say, "Moses didn't really write that and Jesus didn't really say this." "The red letters really aren't the red letters. He didn't say those things." And they vote on it and all that nonsense. What we're trying to do is lower critics just to find out what was in the original. Whatever it was, Jesus said it, God said it. But the higher critics... Well, I totally lost my train of thought, where I was going on that point. I'll come back to it later. See this is a perfect example of how you forget your grocery list and you forget your train of thought. But anyway, the preservation of Scripture. The fact that God has preserved. Okay, now I know. It just takes a little... Praise the Lord. One of the great encouragements that we got in the last century was that at one point in time until 1948, the earliest Hebrew manuscript we had was 900 A.D. Now I mentioned the Old Testament was written between 1,400 B.C. and 400 B.C., a thousand year period, right? And the earliest manuscript then, if you just go by the 1,400, was 1,300 years after the fact, all right? And so the skeptics, the higher critics used to say, "There's no way that you can have any confidence that you're holding an accurate translation, an accurate representation of what God originally gave. They cast doubt on it. "There's no way you have it."

Then the 'Dead Sea Scrolls' were found in 1948 in Israel. Some kids were playing, throwing some rocks, and they threw a rock in a cave and something broke. They went in and they found some pots. Inside those pots were scrolls. They came and brought them out and they found scrolls from virtually all the books of the Old Testament. Not quite, but almost all the books of the Old Testament, all the parts of the Old Testament. When they compared what they had, and they found that these were from about 70 A.D., 1st Century. They were written by Jews, probably the folks living out in the Cumron community near the Dead Sea. They were probably hidden away when the Romans came in and invaded Israel after Jesus had ascended and the church was in its infancy. So these were unbelieving Jews protecting their Scriptures. You see? When they brought them out and compared them, what did they find? Absolute perfection with what they had in 900 A.D. No change. God is governing His Word. He is perfecting His Word. He's protecting His Word. So that really took a lot of the teeth out of the nonsense that was being spewed. That's what happens, the skeptics like to sound clever, and they say their spiel, but just give it time and the Lord will prove them wrong. But the Lord loves

to give His Word in unspectacular ways at first. You see it in the preservation. You also see it in the composition of Scripture.

2) The Composition of Scripture:

The second point, the composition of the Bible. I mentioned earlier, think about the people God chose to write His Word. Moses, David, Amos, a farmer, people from all different walks of life. In fact, almost all the prophets came from outside of the mainstream or the 'in' people. One exception would be Isaiah. Isaiah was apparently a part of the 'in' community, and he was a part of the temple family, the Levite, apparently a priest. Very learned. In fact, one of the most amazing vocabularies in the Old Testament is Isaiah. But he's the rarity, usually you get a farmer. In fact, think about the New Testament. The guy we're reading right now, John, what was his occupation? He was a fisherman. Remember what the Pharisees say about Peter in John, the Sanhedrin, when Peter and John appear before them after Jesus has ascended into Heaven and the Holy Spirit has been given? They are preaching Christ and they heal the man at the temple. Remember that story from Acts? Then they were beaten and they testify before the Sanhedrin, and the people in the Sanhedrin, after they've talked, say, "What is up with these guys? They're unlearned men. How can they speak like they do? They've never been taught." Then it says, "Then they remembered that they had been with Jesus." In fact, it's interesting, John 7, the very beginning when Jesus goes up and takes His stand in the middle of the feast. It doesn't tell us what He said at the beginning, what it tells us is the reaction of the people. They said, "How can this man who is unlearned speak like that?" Isn't that amazing? The echo of that in Jesus and then in His apostles. Why did God do that? He could have had Jesus trained by Gamaliel. No, He didn't want to do that. Well, He was trained directly by His Father. I think that's much better anyway. Now Paul is an exception. Paul was trained by those guys. So the Lord uses not many though, not many wise. He doesn't say none, not many. Not many noble. It's God's way to choose the weak and the lesser. So you see that in the composition, the authors. You see it in their literary styles. In fact, this is one of the things that sometimes people get put off by. They read Peter, or they read John's Greek and they say it's not very sophisticated. "It just doesn't move me." I'm talking about scholars now, who look at this.

In fact, I think I've told the story before, but one of the neat things about Augustine's conversion, St. Augustine, who was converted in the 4th Century. This is when people still spoke Greek, they spoke Greek and Latin, but the learning was done in Greek. The philosophy was done in Greek and he was a philosopher, a man of great learning. You see he was unsaved. His mother was saved and she was

witnessing to him. He had read some of the New Testament. What really bothered him was God would inspire His Word in the Koine Greek, that despicable corruption of the beautiful Greek language. He loved the classical Greek, and he could not believe that God would inspire His Word as He did. The 27 books of the New Testament are all in Koine Greek. The word 'Koine' is related to the word 'coin'. Our word coin comes from that, common, common currency. In fact, the word 'vulgar', we kind of use it as 'profane', but really the word vulgar means 'common'. When God spoke the New Testament, He spoke in the vulgar tongue, the common everyday language. He made His truth accessible to the unlearned. The people could just read. They didn't have to be highly educated. Of course, He made it so those people who couldn't read it had somebody else that would read it to them, that could understand the words and the sentences. That's how God is.

Well some people look at that and they say they don't like the style of Peter. You have different literary styles on display in the Word of God. So you have a book that is truly a human book, but is also truly a divine book. At the same time it's human and it's divine. 100% human and 100% divine. Isn't that amazing that when God chose to write the Psalms, and wanted to breathe His Word through David, He created a life circumstance for David, all of the circumstances of his life, all of the learning, so that what he would think, and what he would purpose in his mind would be exactly what God wanted written on the paper. The same with every author of Scripture. This composition of Scripture at first glance seems unimpressive, but when you look at it, marvel. Think about the New Testament and some of the things we read last week. Verse 52, the last verse in John 7 according to the originals.

John 7:52 ~ They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."

I mean, they despised the Galileans. These are the Judeans talking. These are the people in and around Jerusalem, in and around Bethlehem where David was from. All of that is Judea, that's God's country in their view. Galilee was up north, which had been a part of Israel originally. Many of the tribes had settled up there. It was a part of Canaan, but when the Northern Kingdom fell, when it divided into two kingdoms, and the Northern Kingdom fell, that was the kingdom that fell. They felt like it had been corrupted and polluted because there had been intermarriage up there. The Assyrians had brought other people groups in. It wasn't pure Israelites and so they looked down upon it. There were true Jews up there, from a standpoint of lineage Jews. Jesus was up there. We know He wasn't born there but He lives up there. I imagine they had a Galilean accent. I'm comforted by that, as someone

who some of you might notice I have a little bit of an accent. Nobody would ever think I was born in New York, or even Chicago. Well, the Galileans apparently had an accent too because do you remember when Peter is denying Jesus, they hear him talking and they know he's from Galilee, just by the way he's talking. So they look at that accent and they despise it. "You're one of those people." Look at how many of the New Testament authors were from Galilee, and not only that, but our Savior was raised there. If we could tell the difference, He probably had a little bit of a Galilean accent. Fully man from the most unlikely place. Peter, James, and John, fishermen from Galilee. Matthew, a tax collector. How despised the tax collectors were. God chooses the most unlikely things in the composition in the Word of God.

So you see it in the preservation of the Word of God. Apparently common but in reality supernatural. The same thing in composition. Apparently common guise, but with an uncommon message. Then you come to the proclamation. The proclamation of Scripture.

3) The Proclamation of Scripture:

We read the verse earlier, the foolishness of preaching. Under this last point I want to do two sub-points under proclamation.

A) The Act of Proclamation:

The proclaiming itself is really kind of unimpressive. The fact that we're all sitting in a room listening to a man talk for an hour, isn't that just kind of odd? Seriously! I mean, stop and step back from it and think about that. Why did the Lord do it this way? Couldn't we just gather together and hear a voice directly from Heaven? Tune our spiritual radio in and God speak to us directly. It'd be more impressive, wouldn't it? You bring a friend to hear a Bible teacher that's just a normal guy. You bring a lady friend to hear just a normal lady talk and teach. It's very unimpressive, very unspectacular. No video going. No light show. The foolishness of preaching. What we saw in 1 Corinthians, God has chosen that which seems so unimpressive that when you look at it it doesn't make any sense so that our faith will not rest in the wisdom of men, or the glory of man, but in the power of God. I love what John Calvin says about preaching. He said:

Why did God ordain preaching as the means by which His church, which had received His holy Spirit, had His Word, would continue to hear from God, week by week throughout their lives?

Why? He said there is nothing that humbles the human heart like hearing God speak through another human. He said if God were to speak directly to us, we would feel some sense of humility, but he said when a puny man, risen from the dust, stands up to preach the Word of God, this puny man, risen from the dust, who excels me in no way, then I must bow before the Word of God. That's the reason the Lord has done it, and not just in preaching, that's in our counsel to one another. Why is it that I have to hear somebody else tell me something? Isn't that amazing? I find that myself. I'm a pastor, all the elders can testify to this. If you've been a Christian a long time you know there are times that you know something and you can tell somebody else. "This is your problem. You need to do this. The Lord is showing you this." Then you find yourself not able to apply that yourself in your own life. Why? You have to have somebody else come to you and say, "Ty, you're missing it. It's this." Why? Because the Lord wants me and you to constantly be humbled because He knows that's what we need. So He brings it through another unimpressive package, and if we get distracted and say, "I know that guy is not any better than me," then we in our pride turn away from it. But if we humble ourselves and keep looking at the Word of God, and listening to the Word of God, what do you see? You see the glory of God, the wisdom of God, and the power of God. The Lord, through the act of preaching, that is the way. It's something about hearing.

The Lord could have given us a picture book, but He didn't. The Lord could have given us movies, but He didn't. I'm not saying that there's no place for pictures ever, or no place for movies, but what I am saying is that the primary diet of the people of God apparently from the Word of God, ought to be the preaching of God's Word. That's the way He's intended it. And even in a world which would rather have the bells and whistles, exactly why. "Hey, I know it sounds kind of wild, but I'm telling you, just give it a try. Hear the Word of God." Then those people can say, "Yeah, it's not very impressive, but I heard God speak." It's the wisdom of God and the power of God. Nothing about the wisdom of man or the coolness of how the presentation is done. It's just the Word of God. So the act of proclamation, but also the essence of proclamation. When you think about the preservation of Scripture at first glance doesn't look like impressive, but if you keep looking you say, "Wow! Twenty-five thousand?" When you look at the composition of Scripture, you look at the guys who wrote it, at first glance, not that impressive. But then you keep looking and you say, "This guy who wrote in 70 A.D. sounds just like this guy who wrote in 1,400 B.C., separated by 1,500 years and they're writing the same message. Man that is so amazing." Then when you come to the proclamation, it's the same thing.

B) The Essence of Proclamation:

You look at the act of preaching, but this is where you see it most of all, when you look at the essence of proclamation, the second sub-point under the last point. The essence of proclamation. What is it that we proclaim? We proclaim Christ and Him crucified. A stumbling block to Jews and to Greeks' foolishness. That's our message. Our message is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It's Jesus Christ. The whole Bible is about Jesus Christ. The whole Bible is about the crucifixion of Christ. Everything points to Jesus and everything points to the Cross. That is the decisive moment in world history, that is the essence of what we proclaim, and I want to say to you that at first glance looks very unimpressive. In fact, Jesus at first glance, looked very unimpressive. That was part of the problem that the crowd stumbled at. Isaiah told us 700 years before the birth of Jesus. He's speaking of Jesus and says, "He has no stately form or majesty that we should be drawn to Him. Nothing outwardly impressive about the man. Nothing eye-catching. He's just an ordinary man from Galilee, with a Galilean accent." Yet if you listen to Him, what did those guys say in the last chapter? You know what the temple guards said, the officers? "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks." Never did a man speak like Jesus. You listen to Him and there's something in the voice that comes from a human body. He's got human vocal chords, human lungs breathing out air across His vocal chords, words forming in a mouth, and lips and tongue just like you and me, and yet when He speaks it's different than anybody ever before. That's the way of God.

You look at His associates, look at this ragtag band of disciples He chose. What was He thinking? He was doing just what He's always done. This is the way God reveals Himself to man, He stoops all the way down. From His glory, He came all the way down to speak to us in words we could understand, to touch us in ways we could understand. If you're put off by the initial appearance, you'll never see the glory. But if you keep looking, what you see is the words that come out of His mouth, and the deeds that He does, set Him apart. Never was a man like this man. Never was a man without sin. Jesus was. Never was a man able to speak like He spoke. Never did a man know God like He knew God. As a man, in His humanity, He knew the Father. In His humanity now, His human soul, knew God like no man had ever known God, and yet as people kept looking at Him, they said, "He can't just be merely a man." Of course, He wasn't. We've been told from the beginning, God was going to become a man, and they kept looking. This is what John's message is. He's saying, "Look, we're all in the dark. We need to hear from God." That's John's message and Jesus is the light of the world. In Him was light, life,

and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. The Word became flesh. That sentence itself, when John wrote that, that sentence itself was disgusting to the educated mindset of the 1st Century. The Word, they had an ability to understand what the Word meant. The Word was the ‘alagos’ which meant the organizing principle of the universe. It was kind of a term, loaded term, when John used it. He meant it mostly in Hebrew terms, ‘that which is spoken, that which is revealed’, but the Greek heard also a sense of divinity about it. They believed, because of their dualism, that the Word could never, would never imagine becoming flesh. The Word and flesh would not mix. Unthinkable, and that’s exactly what God did. God took our flesh, Paul clarifies, flesh in the likeness of sinful flesh. It wasn’t sinful flesh, it was in the likeness of sinful flesh. He took flesh just like ours, weak flesh, subject to dependence upon His mother. He had to eat to sustain Himself. He had to breathe. He had to drink. Just like you and me. He took all of that upon Himself and John says, “The Word became flesh,” but he doesn’t end there. He says, “And we beheld His glory.” If you keep looking at Jesus what do you see? You see glory. You see the glory of God shining in the face of Christ. He wasn’t merely a man. Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see. Hail incarnate deity. Jesus man with men did dwell. Jesus our Emmanuel.

It’s a long way to explain why I couldn’t preach that passage. One last thing that I want to say is that there are a number of reasons, let me summarize the reasons for you. I didn’t do this. I meant to do this earlier. The reasons I don’t believe this passage was here in the originals is that no manuscript afore 500 A.D. has John 7:53-8:11 in it. All the early manuscripts don’t have it. Not only do we have all the manuscript evidence, the 25,000 manuscripts and all that, we have the writings of early church fathers. The Anti-Nicene church fathers, that is the fathers before the Council of Nicea, 325 A.D., the church leaders before 325 A.D. quoted the New Testament 32,000 in letters they wrote, in teaching documents that we have. 32,000 quotations and they never quoted from John 7:53-8:11. In fact, when they commented on John’s Gospel, they skipped right over it. They went from John 7:52 to 8:12. None of the eastern church fathers, that is the church that was organized around Constantinople, the Africans and the Syrian Christians, none of them ever references this story until after 1,000 A.D. So apparently it wasn’t there in the originals. It’s a neat story in some ways but it’s not the text. It shouldn’t be given the weight of holy Scripture. When we understand that, we press for the Word of God, and we preach the Word of God.

The last bit of evidence for me that makes it just very comforting is what I just shared with you as compelling and conclusive. It was added in. Let me mention

one other thing. It was added in later in the middle ages, somebody thought, “Hey, this is a great story to put in here. It illustrates the point that Jesus is the light of the world.” I think that’s what they were doing. It was probably well-intentioned, but from the reformers onward, most conservative evangelicals have rejected this. It’s not in the Bible originally. Calvin talked about it. It’s not in the Bible, it’s a good story, and it’s got some profitable teaching probably. It sounds like some other stories in the New Testament. The Council of Trent, the Catholics, put it back in the Bible for sure in 546. Another strike against it. The Council of Trent was making all kinds of bad decisions. They put in the Old Testament Apocrypha then too. Anyway, that’s enough of that sideline, but when you take it out, what you see is the beauty of what John is doing in the passage. In 7:52 he said:

John 7:52 ~ They answered him, “You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.”

Verse 12:

John 8:12 ~ Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

We’re going to unpack this more next week, but I think what Jesus was doing was answering their statement. I’ll show you how, in the previous chapter, and look at this this week. Study it and look at this. You’ll see that what you have going on is dialogue between the crowd and Jesus. The crowd will say something and Jesus will answer it. Sometimes they’ll say something that you think is over here. They’re saying, “Hey, where did this guy get this learning? How does He get this teaching?” You all know that Jesus could hear that. I mean, in His humanity, in His ears, but then all of the sudden He says, “My teaching is not My own.” You see what I’m saying? He answered what they were saying. Then later in the chapter He does the same thing in that they want to seek Him and kill Him in Verses 31 and 32. They wanted to seize Him, but no man laid his hands on Him. This is the Pharisees who sent the officers to seize Him. Then it says Jesus said, “You will seek Me and you will not find Me.” What’s He saying? “I know you’re seeking Me,” and He’s answering their objection again. Do you see that? Then what you have in Chapter 8 is though they’re off to the side talking amongst themselves, Jesus knows what’s being said. They said basically, “No prophet comes from Galilee.” Which was wrong factually anyway, at least Nahum and Jonah do, but *the* prophet is not going to come from Galilee is what they’re also saying. “God wouldn’t do that,” is what they’re saying. I think that’s what Jesus is doing when

He says in John 8:12: ...***“I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness,...*** Look at Isaiah 9. Isaiah 9, a very familiar Christmas passage.

Isaiah 9:1 ~ But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

Skip on down to Verse 6.

Isaiah 9:6 ~ For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

Jesus is alluding to that passage. “You’re talking about nobody good is going to come from Galilee. You’ve forgotten Isaiah 9. That’s why I’ve been walking,” and He wasn’t just raised there. That’s where He did most of His ministry. The way of God was to put His Son into Israel and let Him spend most of His time in the most unattractive, unlikely part, but He had said He was going to do that from the beginning. That’s the way of God. Let’s pray together.

Our Father, we glorify You and just stand in awe of Your infinite wisdom. Lord, at the same time we pour contempt on our pride and our vanity. We know that the essence of sin is to exalt ourselves and we have been born in sin, conceived in iniquity. So we see even now, as believers, we still have a tendency to lift ourselves up. So often in doing that miss the way that You are working. We reject that, we humble ourselves. Even now, help us to pour contempt on our pride. Help us to glory only in the Lord, to boast only in the great things that You have done and how You do such amazing, marvelous things in the most common and surprising ways. Father, we pray for those that are here that need to give themselves to You in salvation, that need to repent and believe the Gospel. We pray that You would grant them grace to break their pride, and break their hearts, and help them to humble themselves, and even now to call out to Jesus Christ. We thank You that in doing all that You’ve done You’ve shown that You are a friend of sinners and that You will draw near to the one who humbles Himself. You will by no means cast

away the one whose hope is in You, but Your words are, “Come. Come unto Me, you who are weary and heavy laden and I’ll give you rest.” Father, we pray that today You would bring some to Yourself in this moment, for eternity. And Father we pray that You would have Your way done in our hearts more and more that You would be exalted and magnified in hearts that are increasingly amazed and in awe of You, and more surrendered and obedient to You. We pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

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