

Sermon: Second Sign at Cana

Text: John 4:43-54 ESV

Gary L. Wackler

September 27, 2020

Introduction: The Father had just come out of the doctor's office. His wife could tell that it was not good news - that it was something more than anemia. You can see bad news by looking into a person's eyes, or by a person's posture, even in the approach of a doctor.

Illus. Ron and Bereth Pannell

In our story today we see bad news turned into celebration, and near tragedy changed into triumph.

John 4:43-54 ESV ⁴³ After the two days he departed for Galilee. ⁴⁴ (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.) ⁴⁵ So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast. ⁴⁶ 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. ⁴⁷ 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. ⁴⁸ So Jesus said to him, "Unless you[a] see signs and wonders you will not believe." ⁴⁹ The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. ⁵¹ As he was going down, his servants[b] met him and told him that his son was recovering. ⁵² So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour[c] the fever left him." ⁵³ 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. ⁵⁴ This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

Footnotes: [a] John 4:48 The Greek for you is plural; twice in this verse

[b] John 4:51 Or bondservants

[c] John 4:52 That is, at 1 p.m.

The boy must have been the young son of one of Herod Antipas's officers either civil or military. He had heard about the Galilean. Everyone had, and they welcomed Jesus even if it was for the wrong reasons. This royal official who was himself powerful, wealthy, and a man of position was willing to go to the town carpenter, if necessary, to get help for his boy.

The Nobleman's rank, riches, power, prominence and position were of no help to his son. With all his wealth, he was still helpless. Money can buy you more doctors, but not necessarily a better prognosis. The nobleman had come to a problem in life that money could not fix. What I have noticed is the intensive care unit (ICU) is a place where PhD's and minimum-wage workers are all equal.

That is a place where God allows all of us to come to at some point in our lives. At that time, all that can help us will be God.

MONEY can buy Companions, but it cannot buy TRUE FRIENDSHIP.

MONEY can buy A BOOK ON HUMOR, but it cannot buy HAPPINESS.

MONEY can buy A MANSION, but it cannot provide A HOME.

MONEY can pay for 4 years IN A UNIVERSITY, but it cannot gain an EDUCATION.

MONEY can hire the best PHYSICIAN IN THE LAND, but it cannot buy HEALTH.

MONEY can build Church buildings, but it cannot purchase a place in HEAVEN.

THE ONLY THING LEFT for that nobleman to do was: GO SEE JESUS.

Jesus had said that a prophet in his own country, had no honor, but yet they welcomed him here in Galilee, even if it wasn't for the right reasons. Most had selfish motives for their welcome. They wanted something for themselves. Jesus even tells them:

48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you[a] see signs and wonders you will not believe." (Mention that "you" is plural in the text.) 49 The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

If *your* son or daughter were sick to the point of death, would you try anything to affect a cure? Of course, you would. The father must have begged Jesus!

In a Jewish document called the Talmud there are instances where people who were seriously ill were restored by the prayers of celebrated Rabbis (Brown, p. 194).

The trip to where Jesus was, measured about twenty miles. Michael Card makes a comment (p. 76) not supported by the text, but logically seems right: "It is incredible to imagine a king's official *running* (my italics) twenty miles to beg a favor of a Galilean preacher."

Yet, the boy was going to die if something didn't change the natural course of events. Haste certainly would have been in order. F.F. Bruce suggests the official may have had a chariot.

Even in our time, people will try everything to extend their lives and fight against disease and death.

Illus. People have taken injections of sheep embryonic fluid/fetal tissue. Do you remember the illegal treatment called laetrile, the injection of ground up apricot pits?

**And who would allow mud to be put on their eyes to cure blindness?
Maybe all of us!**

**Faith is a confessional response to the words of Jesus.
50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live."
The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.**

Faith begins once we hear Jesus' word to us in our need, and we respond trusting and believing in his ability to do what he says He can and will do.

Herod's officer had a preconceived idea of how God HAD to work in this situation. This is certainly a recurring problem for other people Jesus would heal. In fact, we will see it again in [John 5](#). It may even be a problem for us TODAY!

What this noble did not recognize was that Christ, who was God in the flesh, is not confined to our finite understanding.

**God is omnipotent, all powerful
God is omnipresent, everywhere
God is omniscient, all knowing**

There is a doxology in [Ephesians 3](#) that speaks to this: [Ephesians 3:20-21 ESV](#) ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

We started out this year (2020) planning and being excited about celebrating our 125th Anniversary together with friends and family. I really believe that even through the disappointment of not being able to do it, God still has a better plan!

Jesus knew that this officer required a sign (v. 48). The social outcast, half-breed Samaritan woman of earlier in [chapter 4](#) did not require a sign because Jesus knew her need. She just needed to be accepted.

What the officer needed was assurance that his son was going to be alright. Jesus offered that hope in such a way that it was believable.

Some people require signs, for others no amount of evidence is ever enough!

Raymond Brown says that “an over emphasis on the wondrous, blinds that eye to the miracles’ ability to reveal who Jesus is.”

Proof is not always enough. In the Exodus God says to Moses [Exodus 7:3-4 ESV](#) ³ But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, ⁴ Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment.

This portion of scripture in John obviously is a lesson about faith. I wish to pose three questions to you about Faith.

- I. In What Do You Have Faith?
- II. In Whom Do You Have Faith?
- III. Why Have Faith At All?

I. In What Do You Have Faith?

Do you have faith in language, i.e. words to communicate spiritual or psychological healing? Words, if they are God’s words, can heal; but more often when they are man’s words, they may only hurt or destroy if we are not led by God’s Spirit.

Too often even in some of our churches words are more like arrows or daggers than a soothing ointment or healing cream.

We worship our language so much that we fill our lives with T.V. and Radio Facebook and Twitter, and every other verbal diversion except the one that could make us whole/well - God’s Word.

Do you have faith in your deeds? What you can provide.

Mankind, for centuries now, has believed that he can save himself. The technology is in place to extend man's life. But all the conveniences that were to make our lives better have only drove us into isolation and preoccupation with the latest gadgets.

What more could you possibly want?

But man is not getting better and better, and some would say he's worse.

What new perversion or distraction will Satan be using next to take us from our real needs and responsibilities?

Some religious groups have worked out a theology of works salvation. If you do this, God will see that your reward is received here on earth, but not in heaven.

But you see we are saved by God's grace. What we do should be a natural outgrowth of faith, but what we do does not produce faith.

Do we have faith in our tradition, our liturgy, order of worship, our building, our prayers, in the Lord's supper. i.e. if we just make it to church and take communion, or are baptized once upon a time.

II. In Whom Do You Have Faith?

Can you place your faith in parents — divorce

Teachers – inconsistent life styles – they leave

Elders – can move, die, some even lose their way spiritually

Ministers – can facilitate church division, they can run off with secretaries

Friends – let you down

Government officials – they are only faithful to you as long as you reflect the majority opinion and you can help them get elected.

God and his grace remains the only thing in which to place our faith.

There is nothing wrong with faith in a good person as long as you recognize that people are fallible and do make mistakes – no matter who they are “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

So in whom do you place your faith/confidence/trust/hope and not just now but in the future? On whom can you depend? Only in Christ should you have faith for salvation.

If you expect riches or financial success because of your relationship with Christ, you have missed the point.

**Good health all the time
Absence of any personal turmoil**

There is a “prosperity theology,” a “name it and claim it” idea out there. That kind of thinking is totally false. Just ask yourself if that kind of thing was true, how do you explain Jesus or his apostles and how they died?

If you expect an easy time with no challenges once you become involved in the Kingdom, you have missed the point altogether.

Your Church attendance is not enough, giving a tithe is not enough.

If I were to baptize 100 people next year, that would not be enough.

It can never be enough if we are serious about our faith and not just “playing Church.” God does not desire our ritual. He wants our minds and hearts converted to His.

Someone may ask:

III. Why Have Faith at All?

Because without faith it is impossible to please God.

Paul says: [Romans 1:16-17 ESV](#) ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,[a] as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”[b]

Footnotes: [a] Romans 1:17 Or beginning and ending in faith

[b] Romans 1:17 Or The one who by faith is righteous shall live

Why Have Faith? Faith creates life and avoids judgment.

Our story of this miraculous sign that Jesus performs in [John 4](#): is obviously about faith. This story shows Jesus as the one who not only gives life but he sustains and restores life.

And you do not have to demonstrate perfect faith to come to Jesus.

In the early stage of the story the ruler really only recognized his need for help.

Michael Card, p. 73: “Jesus has a weakness for anyone who is about to lose a son.” Here John says faith happens when we take Jesus at his word even before we experience the reality of what Jesus has done and will do.

Conclusion: To believe the word of Jesus is to have faith in him AND his word. Craddock helps us here (*John*, p. 41): “The word is not confined to the bodily presence of Jesus. In this story, it was spoken in Cana and a person was healed in Capernaum...Because of the presence of the word in the church, ours is not a religion of then and there but here and now.”

This was an ongoing misunderstanding about Jesus’ powerful word: [John 11:21 ESV](#) ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

We must learn this lesson in these days where Jesus is gone physically, but his powerful word coupled with the Holy Spirit remain. And the Church is at no disadvantage today, in fact Jesus says we are blessed.

Have you come to a point in your life that you — realize you need help spiritually? It is in our weakness that we come to Jesus because we can not save ourselves.

If we take Jesus at his word and put our faith in Him, we will gladly repent/confess/and be baptized as He has clearly commanded in his word.

As C.S. Lewis put it in *A Grief Observed*:

“You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you. It is easy to say you believe a rope to be strong and sound as long as you are merely using it to cord a box. But suppose you had to hang by that rope over a precipice. Wouldn’t you then first discover how much you really trusted it?... Only a real risk tests the reality of belief.”

Will you take Jesus at his word this morning?