

## 35. The Gospel of John—4:43-54

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*“Believing is Seeing”*

(7/1/18)

The last time we saw our Lord Jesus Christ, He was up in Samaria ministering—

**John 4:43-44 (NKJV)**

<sup>43</sup> Now after the two days He departed from there and went to Galilee. <sup>44</sup> For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

Jesus had been in Jerusalem, **“His own country”** (Jewish territory) for the Passover (John 2:13).

But because He was not honored there in that the religious leadership rejected Him coupled with their increasing animosity towards Him—He purposed to go north into Galilee (Gentile country—Matt.4:15).

However, He needed to stop off in Samaria to bring the Gospel to the Samaritan people—who received Him and believed His Word (4:41).

He stayed there two days teaching and discipling them and then continued north.

**John 4:45 (NKJV)**

<sup>45</sup> So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they also had gone to the feast.

So, a number of Galileans had been in Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover and witnessed the Lord cleansing the Temple (2:13-22) and the miracles He performed (John 2:23)—and so they **‘received Him’** (John 2:24-25).



## I. The Desperate Father

**John 4:46 (NKJV)**

**<sup>46</sup> So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum.**

Capernaum was a wealthy city on the northwestern shores of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus conducted a good portion of His ministry.

The city had a thriving fishing industry and was the economic center of the region—a city that Jesus eventually made His unofficial headquarters when He was ministering in the Galilee.

The word **nobleman** is the Greek word *basilikos* which means “*king’s man*.”

This man was a royal officer of high standing in King Herod’s court (Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great)—and he was a Gentile (there were no Jewish noblemen).

He was a man of great influence, power and wealth—a man, if he were alive today, would no doubt be a top executive (maybe a V.P.) in a Fortune 500 company, drive a BMW, and live in Malibu or Manhattan.

By the world’s standards he was the epitome of success, a man who had it all, except for one thing—his young son was seriously ill.

**John 4:47 (NKJV)**

**<sup>47</sup> When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.**

When it says that this father **implored** Jesus to come down (to Capernaum, about 20 miles from Cana), the Greek is in the imperfect tense (**was imploring**) indicating that he *repeatedly* implored (begged) Jesus to come and cure his son’s disease—in other words, this was a desperate man.



And when you realize he was a man who was used to getting his way by barking out orders that subordinates would instantly carry out.

A proud, powerful man who was, at this moment, reduced to a helpless beggar pleading for mercy on behalf of his son who was at the point of death—when you consider all of that, this becomes an incredibly powerful and poignant scene.

It's interesting how quickly success, earthly power and material wealth fade into irrelevance when someone you love like a child or grandchild is sick and dying—and you, with all your money and influence, are helpless to save them.

Adversity is the great equalizer of the human condition—and none of us are immune.

Someone has said, *“Trouble is not a gate-crasher in the arena of life—it has a reserved seat there. Heartache has a passkey to every home.”*

Or as the Bible puts it, *“Man is born to adversity as surely as the sparks of a fire fly upwards.”* (Job 5:7)

One writer said—

*“There’s nothing like a life-threatening illness, either in your own life or in the life of someone you love, to show you how little money, prestige, and materialism really means.”*

It may sound trite, but it is none the less true that—the most important things in life are the things money can't buy.

Now, the response that Jesus gave this father who was pleading with Him for his son's life takes us back—

**John 4:48 (NKJV)**

**<sup>48</sup> Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you *people* see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe."**



## II. The Displeased Savior

Why would Jesus say this—it sounds harsh and abrupt?

He was obviously displeased with those living in the areas He ministered in—but why?

I think commentator Hugh Ross sums up the problem—

“With unerring accuracy our Lord put his finger on the weakness of the people’s faith. They were following Jesus as if he were a religious sideshow. *“Hurry, hurry, don’t miss the latest miracle! Get your popcorn here. Crowd in close, folks, so you can see the new added-appendage miracle.”* There was such an extreme focus on signs and wonders that the people were missing his real identity. It seems that the poor, confused nobleman had this same idea because of his repeated emphasis on Jesus to *“come down”* to Capernaum to heal his son. He thought that if Jesus would work his magic, his son would be healed. Even today those who are constantly seeking for signs and wonders and miracles to confirm their faith may be missing the intent of such things—to know Jesus himself! If we focus on sensationalism—miracles and signs—our focus is not on Christ himself who alone is sufficient. At the same time, our Lord was not deprecating signs and miracles because he was in fact going to heal the man’s son. But that sign would lead the man to faith in him. The thrust of what Jesus was saying was, *“Oh, that you would think less about the wonders and more about me!”* He wanted them to go beyond signs and miracles to trust in him and believe in his Word.”

Let me just say that Jesus fully intended to heal this man’s son—but first He had to deal with the father himself.

The Lord Jesus is more concerned about our *character* than He is our *comfort*—even though He’s concerned about that too.

He’s more concerned with our *eternal preparation* than He is about our *present situation*—though He’s concerned about that as well.

And if you don’t understand that—you will stumble your entire Christian life over whether or not God is really a good and loving God based on what He allows to touch your life.



A big part of the problem is that too many people have a concept of God that He is this benevolent grandfather figure whose only purpose in life is to sit up in heaven and drop blessings down on them.

And the ‘blessings’, as they define them, are success, wealth and material things like palatial houses, luxury automobiles, boats, summer homes etc.

This view of God has warped and perverted their perception of who He really is and what His true purposes are for their lives—not temporal comforts but eternal rewards.

One of the greatest blessings any parent (including God the Father) can bestow on their children is a godly character—honesty, integrity, kindness, love, a strong work ethic etc.

These qualities take time and effort to build into our children and sometimes it’s unpleasant or painful for them—but in the end the effort will be rewarded as they grow up to be responsible, hard-working, virtuous adults.

We constantly cry out—“*Lord, heal, provide, fix, help*”—and well we should, but if He doesn’t answer immediately let’s understand that patience and faith build Christian character.

Jesus, as the Great Physician, is constantly performing ‘heart-surgery’ on us, the end result being a healthier walk *with* Him and greater work *for* Him.

As one author put it, “*Christ’s words here are mercifully surgical.*”

So, Jesus had every intention of healing this man’s son—but He saw in this father something He knew had to be dealt with first, a weakness in this man’s faith—his obsession with the miraculous.



Some people just have to see God do a ‘magic trick’ before they’ll believe.

In fact, the world (and even many Christians) have a motto they love to quote—“*seeing is believing*” but God says just the opposite—“**believing is seeing.**”

In fact, Jesus took it a step further when He said to Thomas in John 20:29—“*Blessed are those who believe without seeing*” (see Hebrews 11.1).

There are a lot of people in Christian circles like this today who have gotten *hooked on seeing* signs and wonders—and as such they now crave them like addicts craving their next fix.

In fact, when Jesus says—“**Unless you *people* see signs and wonders** [‘miracles’], **you will by no means believe**”—the word He uses for **wonders** is the Greek word *terata*.

That is a word that stresses the awe, the excitement, the exhilaration, the rush of adrenalin that seeing a miracle performed produces in those who witness it.

In other words, Jesus uses a word that implied these people were nothing more than ‘*thrill-seekers*’, ‘*miracle junkies*’ who only wanted to see miracles for the rush of emotion they got!

However, many of them (like this father) tied their faith in Christ to the miracles He did—in other words, the miracles became the basis for their faith (hold that thought).

Apparently, Jesus knowing this man’s heart knew that he was thinking, “*If He does this miracle and heals my son—then I’ll believe in Him.*”

Many people today feel the same way—“*If God comes thru for me, and heals me or my loved one of the cancer—then I’ll believe in Him and if not He’s just a fraud!*”



But there are many *Christians* who have ‘baby faith’ which can only be *fed* by signs and wonders—and where they are absent they will ‘manufacture some’. (Comment)

Their faith is shallow, weak, emotional and experiential.

But just as no child can live on a constant diet of dessert—neither can a child of God live on a constant diet of signs and wonders.

Christians need the meat of the Word to grow strong and healthy in their faith.

And I believe that, in a roundabout way, Jesus is addressing this very issue here.

He is trying to take this man’s weak faith which was predicated on the miraculous and elevate it to a strong faith that was predicated on the Word of God—like the Samaritans who believed His Word and got saved without seeing the Lord perform any miracles for them. (John 4:40-42)

This nobleman probably felt rebuked by Jesus’ comment—however, Jesus’ aim was not to *offend* him but rather to *bring* him to saving faith in Himself.

The Lord Jesus is always trying to lift our faith to new spiritual heights—which He was attempting right here with this desperate father.

Now one thing I do commend this father for was his tenacity—

### **III. The Determined Suppliant**

**John 4:49 (NKJV)**

**<sup>49</sup> The nobleman said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies!"**



This father, undeterred by Jesus' mild rebuke, persisted in his request or *supplication*.

Supplication is a form of prayer—therefore a *suppliant* is one who *prays* to the Lord earnestly for an answer to prayer.

In fact, he was a persistent suppliant who kept 'praying' until Jesus answered with a promise that his son had been healed—and only then did he go his way trusting his prayer had been answered.

When Jesus' disciples came to Him and asked Him to teach them to pray—one of the things He stressed was the importance of persistence in our prayers.

**Luke 11:5-8 (NLT2)**

<sup>5</sup> Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: "Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, <sup>6</sup> 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.' <sup>7</sup> And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, 'Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can't help you.' <sup>8</sup> But I tell you this—though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence."

**Luke 11:9-10 (NLT2)**

<sup>9</sup> "And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."

Persistence in prayer is the lesson the Lord is communicating here.

One author said,

*"This is not the taunt of an indifferent God playing hard to get, treating us like puppies, trying to teach us to beg—and if we stand up on our hind legs and yap loud enough, He'll drop a biscuit in our mouth. No this is the heart of a loving Father exhorting us, even pleading with us to stay in constant communion with Him because He loves us so much".*

I commend this nobleman for praying persistently—albeit inaccurately.



His prayer was basically, “*Hurry Lord and do something before it’s too late*”—it’s never too late for God to work!

But also, he tried to manipulate the Lord in prayer by pleading with Him to ‘*come down to Capernaum*’ (possibly to lay hands on his son)—in other words, he didn’t pray a *direct* prayer—he prayed a *directional* prayer. (Explain)

Too many of our prayers fit into this category—we bring our requests to the Lord and then give Him instructions on *what* He should do and *how* He should answer our prayers.

And even though the Lord wants to answer our prayers—He often won’t until we stop trying to tell Him how to do His work. (Naaman the Syrian in 2Kings 5:1-19)

**John 4:50 (NKJV)**

<sup>50</sup> **Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives." So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way.**

At this point, Jesus elevated this man’s faith from having to see a miracle—to simply believing the Word of the Lord.

A.W. Pink—

*“This is very blessed. It shows us the power of the spoken word not only on the boy that was healed, but on his father, too—‘Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God’ (Rom. 10:17).”*

## **I. The Desperate Father**

## **II. The Displeased Savior**

## **III. The Determined Suppliant**



## IV. The Divine Miracle

### **John 4:51-53 (NKJV)**

<sup>51</sup> And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told *him*, saying, "Your son lives!" <sup>52</sup> Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour [1 o'clock in the afternoon] the fever left him." <sup>53</sup> So the father knew that *it was* at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives." And he himself believed, and his whole household.

So the story ends with, not only this man's son being physically healed—but also of him and his entire family being spiritually healed (from sin) and eternally saved.

And that is always the purpose of miracles, never to entertain, but to point people to Jesus that they might receive Him and Savior and Lord and be saved. (John 20:30-31)

Let me just add this—miracles can encourage a person to believe or strengthen existing faith—but miracles by themselves must never be the foundation upon which faith is built but only the Word of God.

Why is it so important to build your faith on the Word of God and not on miracles?

It's important because we are in the last days where the writers of the New Testament, and even the Lord Jesus Himself, warned us that demonic signs and wonders would be on the increase.

### **Matthew 24:4, 24-25 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you..."

<sup>24</sup> For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. <sup>25</sup> See, I have told you beforehand.

### **2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 (NLT2)**

<sup>9</sup> This man [Antichrist] will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. <sup>10</sup> He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction, because they refuse to love and accept the truth [Gospel/Word of God] that would save them.



**John 4:54 (NKJV)**

**<sup>54</sup> This again is the second sign Jesus did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.**

This statement by John isn't saying that this was the second miracle that Jesus *ever* performed (that would contradict John 2:23 and 3:2)—but rather that this was the second miracle He performed *in Cana of Galilee* (see John 2:1, 11).

Let me end by saying that, the Holy Spirit moved in the heart of John to include this man's story in his gospel because—his story is our story.

He was a person who had a need that no one but Jesus could meet.

He was a desperate man who comes to Jesus humbly and broken, begging for mercy.

And yet, if it wasn't for his dying son—he probably would have never bothered with Jesus.

It was his *need* that drew him to the Savior—plain and simple.

He had no great desire to know the Messiah of Israel, no burning desire to have a relationship with God—but purely out of a physical, emotional need he comes.

Someone has said “*affliction is often God's medicine.*”

It's true that sometimes suffering and sorrow are God's greatest tools to draw someone to the Savior (or closer to Him if you're already saved).

And very often, God uses a physical need (which He often intends to meet) to bring us salvation.



This man came with a physical need and wound up with a spiritual gift of salvation.

It's okay to come to Jesus with a need—no one has ever come to Christ who wasn't driven by a need.

But whatever that need is that causes you to turn to Jesus for help—remember that your greatest need is for forgiveness and eternal life.

Whatever your need is this morning—bring it to Jesus.

He said, “*Come to me all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest...*” (Matt.11:28)—

However, He also said, “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [physical needs] shall be added to you.*” (Matthew 6:33)

**Close**