

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #22

John 4:43-54

I read a famous story of Blondin, who was a famous tightrope artist. At Niagara Falls, he put a balancing rod in his mouth so he could use his hands to push a carefully designed wheel barrow across the rope. He made the trek across the Falls in the presence of many people who broke out in tremendous applause. After completing the feat, Blondin said to the crowd, do you think I could push the wheel barrow back to the other side again. The crowd unanimously responded by saying, "Yes." Blondin then said, "Do you believe I could do this if one of you were riding in the wheel barrow?" One man loudly said, "Yes, Sir." Blondin said, "Good - jump in the barrow and I'll push you across." The man said, "No, Sir."

When you come to the Gospel of John, you come to this question - Do you really believe that Jesus Christ alone can save you from your sins? There are lots of people who say they believe in Jesus Christ, especially when they want some miraculous intervention. There are religious pep rallies that people attend that emotionally appeal to God for some miracle, while ritualistically repeating "in the name of Jesus." Many want to believe in Jesus when they are real sick or when they are in some intense financial bind, but very few want to really trust Him as Personal Savior. Very few actually believe Jesus Christ is the only Personal Savior who can take away their sins.

The purpose of the signs and the miracles that Jesus did was to demonstrate He was God in the flesh so that people would accept what He said they must do to be right with God - namely believe on Him for eternal life. This whole Gospel was written by John so people would believe in Jesus Christ (John 20:31). As we come to this portion of Scripture, Jesus performs an amazing miracle, but the purpose of Him performing this miracle is to communicate a key point:

ANY PERSON WHO PERSONALLY ASKS CHRIST TO GIVE HIM LIFE WILL BE GIVEN LIFE.

In order for one to have life, he must go to Jesus Christ, believing that He is the only one who can give life. If you think you can get life yourself, or through some organization, you will never get it. But when you finally conclude the only Person who can really give me eternal life is the God-man, Jesus Christ, you shall be saved. That is ultimately what this passage teaches.

Now there are three main movements that take place in this section:

MOVEMENT ACTION #1 – Jesus moves from Samaria to Galilee. 4:43-46a

This is precise geographical detail concerning the movement of Jesus Christ. The Bible is a literal book, not some symbolic maze. After the two days Christ spent in Samaria, He stuck to His game plan and went into Galilee. He accomplished what He needed to in Samaria and then He moved on.

I view the "for" of verse 44 as giving a reason why He left Judea and went to Galilee, because He was really not given honor in His own country. There are two views as to what is meant by His own country. One says Judea and the other says Galilee specifically Nazareth, which was His hometown. Other writers such as Matthew, Mark and Luke (Matt. 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24) refer to the fact that He was not welcome in Galilee and John brings out the fact that He was not welcome in Judea. I view it as referring to Judea. Christ was not really received in Judea, particularly in Jerusalem, which really was where He belonged. There was terrible religious hostility brewing in Judea against Jesus Christ. The context would seem to merit a Judea interpretation, for there is a contrast between those who did not welcome Him and the Galileans who did welcome Him (v. 45). But the truth is - **sooner or later, Jesus was not welcome anywhere He went.** Truth is, He isn't even welcome today in most people's lives. But that did not stop Him from carefully teaching the Word of God, heralding the truth. He just kept at His work, no matter what the response.

Don't be shocked if you are right where God wants you to be and you discover that you are not really honored or accepted the way you should be. Christ is leaving Samaria, where He is wanted and loved (4:40), to go to places where He will be despised. Many people will go someplace for a promotion, but few go someplace for a demotion. In all reality, that is what Jesus did when He came to this earth; He demoted Himself so He could promote us.

Although He was gaining a reputation and pseudo popularity, the religious people of Judea did not receive Christ, they hated Him. On the other hand, the Galileans welcomed Christ and received Him (4:45). Now keep in mind that this is God in the flesh. God was not welcomed and received by His own Jewish people who should have loved Him and honored Him. Instead, He was some circus act drawing big crowds. So Christ went back north to Galilee. Now the particular city that Christ went to was Cana (4:56), which was the same city where He turned water into wine.

MOVEMENT ACTION #2 – A royal official travels from Capernaum to Cana to see Jesus.
4:46b-50

Now Capernaum was located about 20-25 miles northeast of Cana. The words "royal official" indicate that this man was a key officer under Herod. We are not sure if he is a Jew or Gentile but the Greek word for "royal official" βασιλικος indicates he had a close relationship with the King. He had a son who was very sick (4:46), to the point of death (4:49) and the sickness was some type of fever (4:52). What we have here is an important official traveling 25 miles to beg Jesus to save his son. He swallows his pride and goes to the one person he thinks can give life to his son. This is a minimum 4-5 hour trip, one way.

This man heard that Jesus was in Cana and although he had never seen a miracle, he had heard of the miracle he performed there (4:46) and probably heard of the miracles He performed in Jerusalem (2:23) and he immediately traveled to see Him (4:47).

Since this man was a leading man of prominence, we may be certain that he had quite a bit of money, a fact we know is true because he had servants (4:51). He would have spared no expense to try and heal his son.

More than likely he had brought in the finest doctors and purchased the finest medicine and medical supplies. It seems he did have round the clock medical care (4:52). But the problem is this was a sickness that no amount of money could heal. It took a physical catastrophe with his own son to get this ruler to come to Christ. Christ was choosing fishermen and sinners to do His work but not proud rulers of the world.

May I say, it doesn't matter who you are, how successful you are or what you have, eventually some tragedy will hit you, and there will be nothing you can do to prevent it or stop it. The best thing to do, the wisest thing to do is to get close to Jesus Christ. He will walk with you through the shadows of death, He will not leave you nor forsake you and He will comfort you.

Listen - one may be a very successful person who has a lot of money. One may have prosperity, possessions and power. One may surround himself with people of the highest caliber - but that still will not heal one from their sin problem. There is only One who can heal you of your sin problem and His name is Jesus and you must personally go to Him. There are four verbal actions that take place here and one non-verbal action:

(Verbal Action #1) - The request of the official. 4:47

This ruler went to Christ knowing he was a miracle worker (4:47), but not knowing He was the Savior of the world (4:42). He was willing to risk his own honor and position by personally and publicly going to Christ. He could have sent servants and been less conspicuous, but he went himself.

Now in verse 47, the official was asking if Christ would go down to Capernaum and heal his son. The Greek word "imploring" is imperfect tense, indicating this was a continuous action. Now this very request shows that the faith of this man was limited in at least two ways:

(Way #1) - His faith was limited in that he thought Christ must be physically present to heal his son, which was not true;

(Way #2) - His faith was limited because he thought Christ must heal his son before he dies, which also was not true. Had this man truly understood who Christ was, he would have realized that Christ can give life even if my son dies because He is God. But He didn't quite get it and neither did others. **This is the whole point; Jesus Christ can give life to people who are dead in their sins.**

(Verbal Action #2) - The response of Jesus. 4:48

Christ, at times, seems to repel applicants. He was not interested in being politically correct, He was interested in communicating truth and He could look into the heart of every person and apparently He saw that some type of faith could be generated if He healed this man's son.

We live in a time when churches want to be so politically correct. They want to be a friend of everybody. They will make everyone feel welcome, regardless of who they are or what they believe. Don't offend. Don't stand for truth. Just make people feel good about themselves. Jesus did not operate that way. He was about communicating truth and if you didn't want to hear the truth or believe it, you did not snuggle up with warm feelings to Jesus Christ.

When Jesus got wind that this man wanted His son healed and He knew everyone wanted to see a miracle, He rebuked everybody by saying, unless you see a miracle you people (plural) will not believe.

There are so many people who just want to see some miracle. They are not really interested in knowing who Jesus Christ really is or in having a deep personal relationship with Him, all they want is to see a miracle. They don't want to face the fact that they are a sinner and He is the only Savior. Jesus saw a need for rebuke, even when this man's son was dying. There are some things more important than death and faith in Jesus Christ is one of those things.

Signs do not typically generate real faith (John 14:11).

I would call this **Faith-Type #1 - faith that is based on signs and wonders**. This is a very shallow faith that usually never develops and matures and often quits.

(Verbal Action #3) - The request of the Official. 4:49

The official said - I am not looking for signs and wonders, all I want is for my son to have life. If a person dies before coming to faith in Jesus Christ it is too late. Christ must be in one's life before death. One must make contact with Jesus Christ before death. The official pleads with Christ to come before his child dies. This official was willing to humble himself to go to Christ even though he really didn't know who He actually was.

(Verbal Action #4) - The response of Jesus. 4:50a

Our Lord refused to go with this man. He does not submit to his request to "come down" (4:49). Cana was in the hills and Capernaum was at sea level, so literally Christ would have to "come down" geographically. Again, notice the pinpoint accuracy of John.

Jesus said go on home, your son lives. **This is all it takes - one judicial declaration of Jesus Christ and a person lives**. All it takes is for Jesus Christ to say - your sins are forgiven and you have eternal life. **He only has to say it once**. He will say it if you will come to Him and believe on Him. You do not need to have Jesus physically present to give you life. Millions upon millions who have never seen Christ have received life from Him.

(Non-Verbal Action #5) - The faith of the royal officer. 4:50b

There are actually two miracles performed here - 1) Jesus heals the boy's sick body ;
2) Jesus heals the Father's sinful heart .

Now notice the response of the man - he "believed the word." Friend that is what you must do to be saved from your sin - believe the word that Jesus is the only one who will save you. He didn't have to do anything. He simply believed Jesus Christ could save his son because He said so.

This is **Faith-Type #2 - a faith that is based on the Word of God**. This is a strong faith. This is a faith that takes God at His word. This is a faith that will really see God do powerful things. Do you see what gives life - believing the Word of God. Do you believe that when Jesus says believe on Him and you will have everlasting life, it is true? That is the kind of faith that saves.

MOVEMENT ACTION #3 – The royal official travels from Cana back to Capernaum.
4:51-54

As the official was traveling back home, he was met by some of his servants who informed him that the fever broke and his son was alive and well. Notice the voice of God is speaking through a slave. God will speak through unlikely servants.

The official asked when it happened and was informed in the "seventh hour" which would mean at 7 p.m. last night. That was the very hour that this official had been talking to Jesus and he finally believed, I have been talking to God. Not only did this man believe only in Jesus Christ, but everyone connected to his house believed (**4:53**). **All this man could do was believe in Jesus Christ. There were no works involved, no promises involved, simple faith that Jesus Christ is the One who can save from sin.**

The postscript to this story is that this miracle doesn't make much of a dent in the minds and hearts of most of the people. Most do not believe.

This was the second sign that Jesus performed in Cana. The first showed His power over water. The second showed His power over sickness and this time He wasn't even physically there. This is **Faith-Type #3 - a faith that rests only in Jesus Christ**.

Everyone connected to this officer got life because they believed on Jesus Christ. We all have a death sentence on us in that we are all sinners. If you will invite Christ into your life to be your Savior, you shall be saved.

No matter how desperate your need, Jesus Christ can and will meet it. But you must personally go to Him by faith.