

Freddy Fritz / General

Signs / Sign; Signs/Semeia Source; Johannine Sign; Gift of Healing; Faith / Jn 4:43–54

The third sign in John 4:43-54 teaches us that Jesus is the Son of God who grants life by the word of his power.

Introduction

Loving parents will do anything to get their sick child well.

When two of John Crowley's young children, Megan and Patrick, were diagnosed with a rare neuromuscular disease called Pompe Disease, the disease was considered a death sentence.

Crowley gave up his entire life to pursue a cure for his children. Geeta Anand of the *Wall Street Journal* writes,

“Seeking a treatment, Mr. Crowley... quit his job as a financial consultant, met with legions of scientists and teamed up with one. He borrowed \$100,000 on his home and 401(k) plan to start a biotech company, then raised \$27 million in venture capital when the company developed an enzyme that showed early promise. When he thought he needed the muscle of a big company to get a drug into production and testing, he sold his company to Genzyme Corp., of Cambridge, Mass., for \$137.5 million.”

There's a lot more to the story, but it ends with Crowley getting the needed medication for his children.

Having saved their lives, his new mission is to find a medication that works even better, as well as help other families find medications to treat rare diseases (Geeta Anand, “For His Sick Kids, a Father Struggled to Develop a Cure,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 26, 2003, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB106184568337857300>.)

Today, we are going to examine the story in John's Gospel where Jesus healed an official's very sick son.

This is the third of seven signs—or miracles—in John’s Gospel that he wrote so that his readers “may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing [they] may have life in his name” ([John 20:31](#)).

Scripture

Let’s read [John 4:43-54](#):

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 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 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 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.

Lesson

The third sign in [John 4:43-54](#) teaches us that Jesus is the Son of God who grants life by the word of his power.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. Jesus Returned to Galilee (4:43-45)
2. Jesus Received a Request for Help (4:46-49)

3. Jesus Healed the Official's Son (4:50-53a)
4. Jesus Evoked a Response of Faith (4:53b-54)

I. Jesus Returned to Galilee (4:43-45)

First, Jesus returned to Galilee.

We read in [John 4:43-45](#), **“After the two days he departed for Galilee. (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.) 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.”**

Jesus spent two days in Sychar. He met a woman who had come to draw water at the well in the middle of the day (see [John 4:1-42](#)). After a remarkable discussion with the woman at the well, she came to believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and the only Savior of sinners.

In addition to the Samaritan woman, many more Samaritans came to believe that Jesus was indeed the Christ.

Then Jesus left Sychar and traveled to Cana in Galilee.

The road from Sychar to Cana is about 49 miles. It would have taken Jesus and his disciples two or three days to walk that distance.

Jesus' **“hometown”** was the place of his birth, that is, Bethlehem in Judea. He was shunned there by the religious leaders. Thus, he had **“no honor in his own hometown.”**

However, the Galileans, who also claimed Jesus as their own were thrilled with him. They had just seen several miracles that Jesus had done at the Passover Feast in Jerusalem (see [John 2:23](#)). Like Jesus, they had also just returned from Jerusalem to Galilee.

The Galileans were treated as inferior by the people of Judea, so the Galileans were delighted that Jesus, who grew up in Nazareth of Galilee, had gained such popularity.

However, unlike the Samaritans who believed that Jesus was the Christ and the Savior of the world, the Galileans welcomed Jesus because of his miracles and popularity and not because of his teaching.

II. Jesus Received a Request for Help (4:46-49)

Second, Jesus received a request for help.

In verse 46, we read about Jesus, **“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.”**

Capernaum was located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, and it was about 12 miles from **Cana**.

Jesus had made **Capernaum** his ministry headquarters (see [Matthew 4:13](#); [Luke 4:31](#)).

The **“official”** was likely someone attached to the service of King Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee from 4 BC to 39 AD.

The official’s son was **“ill.”** The Greek word for **“ill”** (*esthenei*) means “a condition of weakness, feebleness, frailness, and sickness.” It is the same word that John later used to describe the illness of Lazarus (see 11:1).

A note in *The ESV Study Bible* makes the following helpful point:

John shows Jesus bringing the gospel to a respected Jewish teacher ([John 3:1–21](#)), then to an outcast Samaritan woman (4:1–42), then to an official working for the Roman government (4:46–54), and thus, by implication from these examples, to everyone in the world (Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008], 2029).

Verse 47 states, **“When this man [that is, the official] 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.”**

We are not told what the official knew about Jesus. Most likely, the official had heard that Jesus was able to heal people. So, he went to Jesus because he wanted a miracle worker to heal his son.

The official did not go to Jesus because he thought or believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

Nevertheless, the official must have loved his son very much because he was seeking desperate measures to find a cure for his son, who was at the point of death.

It is good for people to turn to Jesus when they find themselves in desperate situations.

However, Jesus does not always heal miraculously, although sometimes he does.

Sometimes our desperate situations are because of our own sin and folly.

At other times, it might be due to the sin of others.

And at still other times, it is simply because we experience the brokenness of a fallen world.

In all situations, however, Jesus can sympathize with us and comfort us.

Here is the point: Jesus may not always give us what we want but he will always give us what we need.

We read in verse 48, **“So Jesus said to him, ‘Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.’ ”**

Signs point beyond themselves.

Signs reveal the glory of God (see 2:11: 11:4, 40).

The word **“you”** in Jesus’ answer to the official is plural, and so Jesus’ challenge was not merely to the official but also to the Galileans.

Jesus wanted the official (and the Galileans) to see beyond the **signs**. He wanted them to see that he was Christ sent from God.

Some people today still seek miracles. They look for preachers that claim to do miracles.

However, as commentator D. A. Carson notes, “Miracles cannot compel genuine faith (e.g. 11:45–46)” (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New

Testament Commentary [Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991], 238–239).

Nevertheless, Jesus did miracles to encourage faith in himself. The point of miracles was to point to Jesus.

They were to encourage faith in Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of sinners.

In other words, the goal of miracles was Jesus and not the miracle itself.

Verse 49 states, **“The official said to him, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies.’ ”**

The **official** was not put off by Jesus’ gentle rebuke.

He implored Jesus to **“come down before my child dies.”** The official was respectful in his address to Jesus by using the term **“Sir.”**

One senses the anguish in the father’s heart for his beloved son.

He did not argue with Jesus about his rebuke.

The official desperately wanted Jesus to do something for his son.

III. Jesus Healed the Official’s Son (4:50-53a)

Third, Jesus healed the official’s son.

We read in verse 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.”**

The Greek word for **“Go”** is an imperative. That is, it is a command.

Jesus commanded the official to return home.

But Jesus also gave the official a promise. The phrase in English **“your son will live”** could also be translated as “your son lives.”

Jesus assured the official that his beloved son was fine.

Jesus was calling the official to trust in him. Jesus did not need to be present to bring about a miracle of healing.

Wonderfully, the official believed the word of Jesus and returned home.

However, because of the time of the day, it appears that the official spent the night nearby and continued his journey down to Capernaum the next day.

Verses 51-53a tell us what happened next to the official, **“As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, ‘Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.’ The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, ‘Your son will live.’ ”**

The **“seventh hour”** was about 1 P. M. The official realized that was the exact time the day before that Jesus had said to him, **“Your son will live.”**

IV. Jesus Evoked a Response of Faith (4:53b-54)

And fourth, Jesus evoked a response of faith.

We read the official’s response in verse 53b, **“And he himself believed, and all his household.”**

Commentator Ralph W. Harris writes:

A major theme found in chapters 2 to 4 is the reaction of different individuals to the message of Jesus and the degree of faith they had in Him. John records that after Jesus turned the water into wine, “his disciples believed on him” (2:11). In contrast to this, many in Jerusalem believed because of Jesus’ signs, but perhaps their faith was inadequate since “Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men” (2:24). Then follows the story concerning Nicodemus (3:1–21) who did not yet fully believe. In chapter 4, both the Samaritan woman and the whole village of Sychar believed (4:29, 42). Finally, the nobleman and his household believed in Jesus because of the healing He performed (4:53). (cf. Brown, Anchor Bible, 29:cxliii, 197.) The second theme found in this passage is that of Jesus giving life. In His talk with Nicodemus, Jesus had told him that God sent His only Son in order that the world might have eternal life (3:16, 36). Jesus had also told the Samaritan woman that He could give water that produces life (4:14). Finally, with the healing of the official’s son, Jesus proved that He can give life, as He did again by raising Lazarus from the dead (11:25) (Ralph W. Harris, ed., John, The Complete Biblical Library: Study Bible [WORDsearch, 2009], 115).

Finally, John concludes this narrative with these words in verse 54, **“This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.”**

Jesus had performed other signs in Jerusalem but the healing of the official’s son was his second sign in Galilee, the first being turning the water into wine in Cana.

Conclusion

The third sign in [John 4:43-54](#) teaches us that Jesus is the Son of God who grants life by the word of his power.

The point of all the signs is to show us who Jesus is.

John said in [John 20:30-31](#), “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Yes, it was wonderful that the official’s son was healed.

But, if that was all that happened, it would have been a tragedy for the official and his family when they died and spent eternity in hell.

Jesus’ ability to heal the body is meant to point us to the truth that he is the only one who can heal our souls and give us eternal life.

You are all familiar with COVID-19. Before 2020, almost no one in the world had heard of this new (or novel) coronavirus.

By mid-March 2020, nations around the world took emergency precautions and shut down businesses, schools, travel, and borders. Lockdowns quickly went from suggestions to rules.

It was not long before the entire world was affected by the COVID-19 disease.

As of today, there is no consensus about the origin of COVID-19. There are two general theories about the origin of the deadly disease.

One theory is that the virus began in Wuhan, China in a “wet market,” which is a live animal market where animals are purchased and slaughtered on the spot. It spread quickly throughout the world.

A second theory is that the virus was created in a virology lab, also located in Wuhan, China. Perhaps the virus was released by accident. Or, worse, the virus was released by intention. Whether by accident or intention, the virus got into the community and spread to the rest of the world.

Now, I realize that there are people who have very strong views about the origin of COVID-19.

I really don’t know how the virus originated.

But, for the sake of illustration, let’s imagine that the coronavirus came about according to the second theory.

In fact, let’s take this illustration further and imagine a rather shady doctor wearing a thick, yellow, protective suit. He somehow managed to make his way in the middle of the night into a deep chamber in the laboratory past a sign that read DO NOT ENTER.

He managed to avoid motion detectors and laser deterrent systems. He managed to get into a room that was labeled WARNING.

This mad scientist went over to a large table filled with beakers. He picked up one pink, bubbling beaker filled with the deadly virus. The beaker had a label that said DO NOT TOUCH.

Then, for whatever malevolent reason, the shady doctor took the beaker filled with the deadly virus, got out of the building, and released its content to the public.

A new disease was released on humanity, the plague for the ages.

Once he released the deadly virus, it spread from person to person and from nation to nation throughout the entire world, wreaking havoc upon all humanity.

Pastor Matt Everhard, who shared this illustration in his book *Souls*, goes on to write:

In a sense, this is exactly what Adam and Eve did in [Genesis 3](#).

They touched the one vial in the lab labeled WARNING and released a plague of trespass, rebellion, evil, and sin into the world. Death and destruction were certain to follow.

Perhaps they did not fully understand the ramifications of their action.

Perhaps their ignorance factored in prominently. No matter.

The Bible is clear, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” ([Romans 5:12](#)).

Now, since we are describing a somewhat fanciful account of the origin of COVID-19, comparing it to Adam’s error in bringing sin into the world in the Garden of Eden, let’s also imagine that there is another beaker in another lab with a cure.

Not just a treatment intended to lessen the symptoms, but an actual *cure*.

Just one drop of this precious red elixir can heal the sick and reverse the deadly pathogen of the plague.

Though no cure for COVID-19 exists, there is definitely a cure for the plague of sin....

The cure for souls is the blood of Jesus Christ (Matthew Everhard, *Souls: How Jesus Saves Sinners*, [Ichthus Publications, 2023], n.p.).

Jesus’ sign of healing the official’s son was designed to point us to himself as the Son of God who grants life—eternal life—by the word of his power.

How do you receive this life?

Just like the official whose son Jesus healed.

Believe in Jesus. Amen.