

John 4.43-54 / COB / 03.16.14

Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: Title]** Let's pray...
- † A friend of mine had a young boy who got some strange infection that basically shut down both of his lungs and one kidney. One day he seemed fine, the next they were rushing him to the hospital. His problems were so acute, so complex, so life threatening, that the hospital couldn't handle it, so they transported him to a children's hospital in the big city. The doctors could not tell for sure what was wrong, but his infection measures were sky high. Later, they decided RSV was attacking his lungs and something else was infecting his kidneys. We were all praying fervently, for this little boy who was at risk of dying. His parents were emotionally fragile – you can imagine! – but they turned to God in prayer and faith, asking for healing. I was impressed that they also prayerfully acknowledged God's sovereignty to make that decision, and trusted that God would get them through whatever happened.
- Probably all of us experienced the death of a loved one. What if today someone you love desperately got desperately sick, how would you react? How would you feel inside? How well would you carry on with daily life? What would you be saying to God?
 - Today, we are going to read about another father whose son is close to death. We'll see how he handles it, and what Jesus is willing to do about it.

[Slide 2: 4.43-45] John 4.43-45 [NET]: After the two days [with the Samaritans] he [Jesus] departed from there to Galilee. (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him because they had seen all the things he had done in Jerusalem at the feast (for they themselves had gone to the feast).

- † **[Slide 3: Translations]** We have in v.45 a good illustration of different translation strategies. Word-for-word translations, like NASB or ESV, say the Galileans welcomed Jesus, *having seen* what he did in Jerusalem.
- But the verb translated as “having seen” is in the form of a perfect participle. You might not know what that is, but in Greek it usually signifies causality. NET, being more flexible with the text, translates to emphasize that causality: the Galileans welcomed Jesus, because *they had seen* what he had done in Jerusalem.
 - NIV for some reason makes two sentences out of this, losing the connection: the Galileans welcomed him [period], they *had seen* what he had done in Jerusalem. All of these are good Bible translations, but I think the NET does the best job here.
 - Wednesday night, when I stopped by worship practice, Sarah Amey was here studying essential and nonessential clauses for English class. I looked at her work, looked at her,

prayed for her, and moved on, because I had no idea what that meant. But I awoke Friday with an epiphany. If the text said the Galileans welcomed Jesus “while standing in the road,” “while standing in the road” would be nonessential, because you don’t need it to understand the point. But the clause “because they had seen what he had done in Jerusalem” is essential, because why they welcomed him is John’s point.

- † **[Slide 4: 4.43-45]** Ok, enough Greek, back to our story. You will remember, Jesus was walking from Judea north to Galilee, but he stopped for two days at Sychar, in Samaria. Now he is continuing on into Galilee. This is the view he would have had as he approached the ridge south of Nazareth while crossing the Jezreel Valley

- † Jesus apparently taught his disciples that prophets were not usually honored in their own country, or some translations say, “hometown.” In this case, Jesus probably was referring to all of Galilee, what we would call the county in which he had grown up.
 - What the apostle John is contrasting for us here is what Jesus just experienced in Samaria with what he will now experience back among his own people, the Jews, in Galilee. In Samaria, remember, many people overcame their racial, religious, and historical prejudices, to believe that Jesus was the Savior of the world.
 - Now, in Galilee, Jesus will return to his own people, who have a covenant relationship with God, but there he will find harder hearts and doubtful minds. They will not honor him.

- † But wait! Doesn’t the text say that the Galileans welcomed Jesus? Yes, they welcomed him, but why? Did they welcome him because they believed he was the long-awaited Messiah-Savior of the world? Is that what the text says? No; what does it say here? They welcomed him because they had seen his miracles in Jerusalem, when Jesus was there after clearing the temple.
 - You will recall that at the end of chapter two, we saw that their faith was insufficient, they viewed Jesus as a hero-figure, as a prophet maybe, but not as the Messiah-Savior; and Jesus knew their hearts and minds at that time.
 - So now he is returning to his home country or his home county, and the people are welcoming, but they still do not believe the teaching about who he really is. They do not honor him as the Messiah-Savior of the world.

[Slide 5: 4.46-47] John 4.46-47: Now he came again to Cana in Galilee where he had made the water [into] wine. In Capernaum there was a certain royal official whose son was sick. When he heard that Jesus had come back from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and begged him to come down and heal his son, who was about to die.

- † We are not sure why Jesus is going to Cana, but perhaps it is to visit the couple who got married back in chapter two. This is the place where Jesus did his first miracle, turning water into wine at the wedding feast.

- † Cana, you will recall, is a remote village on the other side of the mountains from the Sea of Galilee, about twenty miles and a two day journey from Capernaum. Capernaum was a thriving city on the seashore. On our map, Cana is the lower star and Capernaum is the upper star, roughly due east of Cana.
 - Since the royal official was living in Capernaum, he probably worked for Herod Antipas, who was the appointed political leader of Galilee at this time. Herod Antipas also is the one who later would have John the Baptist killed.
- † This official, who traveled up over the mountains from Capernaum to Cana, would have been Jewish, and for our author John, he illustrates the contrast just mentioned between the Samaritans and the Jewish Galileans: while the Samaritans wanted Jesus just because of who he was as the Savior, the Jewish Galileans want Jesus for his miracle powers.
 - There is nothing wrong with a father coming to beg Jesus to heal his son, but the way John has presented the scene, we can infer that this father believes in Jesus' power, but not in his identity as the Messiah-Savior.
 - I have had atheists ask me to pray when their loved ones were in a crisis. They don't believe in Jesus like I do, but they are willing to take a gamble on me having the "right connections." There is nothing wrong with their requests, but they do not indicate true faith in Christ.

[Slide 6: 4.48] John 4.48: So Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders you will never believe!"

- † When Jesus says, "you people" here, he is talking about the Galilean Jews. He is talking to the one royal official, but he is lamenting about the theme of this scene, that the Jews in Galilee do not really believe in him as the Messiah-Savior; they need a steady flow of miracles to keep their interest in him.
- † While this is an accurate assessment of the crowd, it might seem a harsh response to this father who has come to beg for the life of his son. I would like to suggest that Jesus is going to use his accurate assessment to firm up the resolve and faith of this father.
 - When I taught economics at a community college, I would tell the students the first day that if they were looking for the easy A, they should change teachers, because I was going to teach the same course as I taught at Georgetown, and I would make them sweat for a decent grade. I would lose a good portion of the class that first week, but the students who stayed generally were determined to show me that they could measure up.
 - In the gospels, we see Jesus repeatedly raise the bar for following him, which chases away much of the crowd, but firms up the resolve and faith of those who are meant to be his disciples. I think something like that is happening here, and Jesus' statement will help clarify what is important for those who do follow him.

[Slide 7: 4.49-50] John 4.49-50: “Sir,” the official said to him, “[please] come down before my child dies.” Jesus told him, “Go home; your son will live.” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and set off for home.

- † In Greek a command and a request can take the same form, so the translator has to determine how to express it correctly in English. The NET, which served us well in v.45, let’s us down a little here, as do most other English translations. We know from v.47 that the father is begging, not commanding. “Please come down before my child dies.”
- † Unlike Nicodemus or the woman at the well, the official does not want to engage in theological discussion. He is there as an urgent father, his son is dying, and Jesus is his last hope, so he is begging, and he will not be distracted from his purpose.
- † Does Jesus go with him, like the man asks? No. Jesus sends the man away. But Jesus promises, declares, that his son will live. The man believed this word Jesus spoke to him, and started for home.
 - That shows a lot of faith in Jesus’ power! I mean, ok, we know this guy has at least a slim hope that Jesus can heal his son, probably because he saw Jesus do some healing miracles in Jerusalem at the Temple. So I understand him coming to beg, and I would understand if he stood there and insisted Jesus come with him. “Come now and pray over my son! Come now and touch him!”
 - I could even understand if the text said the father turned away disappointed. He had travelled the better part of two days to humiliate himself by begging, this was his last hope to save his son’s life, and he had failed to persuade Jesus to come. I could see him going home disappointed and angry.
 - But to believe that simply by saying it was so Jesus could make his son well? Wow, that is a lot of trust. But it says the man believed Jesus, so he must have set off for home with even more hope than when he arrived. It is praiseworthy that he could trust in Jesus’ word and power, even though Jesus did not do it the way the man expected.

[Slide 8: 4.51-53] John 4.51-53: While he was on his way down, his slaves met him and told him that his son was going to live. So he asked them the time when his condition began to improve, and they told him, “Yesterday at one o'clock in the afternoon the fever left him.” Then the father realized that it was the very time Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live,” and he himself believed along with his entire household.

- † While on the road back across the mountains, this official’s slaves rode up and told him his son was healed! Imagine his relief! I have never had children, but I know how relieved I was when I learned my niece and nephew who live in Newtown, Connecticut, were ok after the shooting. I know how my friends felt when their son miraculously fought off his infections...

- † Then the slaves told him that his son was healed of his fever at exactly the moment when Jesus declared he would be healed! God used this father's relief at his son's recovery and the power of Jesus' declaration of instant healing to inspire faith in this man. He had already believed in Jesus as a healer and prophet, now he was willing to believe that Jesus really was the Messiah!
- † The text says the man himself believed along with his household. He did not keep his faith to himself: he shared with his family his confidence that it was Jesus who had healed his son and that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah-Savior from God. And they believed too.
 - So Jesus gave this boy not only the gift of physical life, but the gift of spiritual life and salvation for himself and his family, starting with his father, who had met Jesus and now would never be the same.

[Slide 9: 4.54] John 4.54: Jesus did this as his second miraculous sign when he returned from Judea to Galilee.

- † The construction of the Greek makes it clear that Jesus deliberately did this miracle as a sign, the text emphasizes not only his power, but also his sovereignty, his control.
 - This was not Jesus' second miracle. We know he had been doing many down in Judea. But this was his second sign given in Galilee.
- † A sign in this gospel is a work of God that brings people to faith in Jesus as the Messiah.
 - Hundreds of years earlier, the prophets Elijah and Elisha had brought young boys back to life by the work of God through them as they physically touched the boys. Jesus, as the Greater Moses Prophet, is a greater prophet than even Elijah and Elisha: he heals a boy without even seeing him, just by his word, which is the word of God.
 - We all are vulnerable to disease and death. Only God can change that. Yet Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah would be able to heal. And here is Jesus, choosing to declare that someone will be well, and he is! Jesus is the divine Son of God who came as the promised human Messiah-Savior, whom we call Christ.
 - In the previous miracle at Cana, Jesus did something where he was, and now he has done a healing at a distance, just by his declaration; before, Jesus transformed water into wine, now he has given life to a person. The earlier miracle strengthened faith whereas this one inspired new faith. There is significance in what Jesus is revealing, if only we will be open to seeing it.

Conclusion

- † Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Greater Moses Prophet, which are all ways of saying that Jesus is the divine-human Savior from God.

- Because of who he is, Jesus can heal anybody, of anything, at any time, simply by speaking or willing it to be so. He is that powerful.
- † Still, Jesus is not Santa Claus. We can bring our requests to him, but we err if we think of him just as a source of gifts or even of miracles.
- Will you believe even if you never see Jesus do something miraculous? Will you believe even if Jesus does not answer your prayer?
- † **[Slide 10: top line]** Remember, when we choose to walk on the top line by God's revelation instead of on the bottom line by fleshly human wisdom, we are trusting God to give us the blessing we seek; but he might say no or he might delay or he might do something we don't expect, like Jesus refusing to go down to Capernaum.
- But by taking the top line, we are saying, like the Proverb we read earlier, that we will not be wise in our own eyes or lean on our own understanding, but rather we will trust in the Lord with all our heart and submit to him, we will trust in God's way being right and we will continue to trust in him and his way, no matter what result we get. True faith is unconditional.
- † We need to turn to Jesus in faith, first for salvation from the condemnation we deserve for our sinfulness, for deliverance from God's wrath at our rebellion. We need to see him and trust him as our Savior.
- Then we need to recognize that who he is demands our reverence, our respect to the point that we are devoted to him, dependent on him, and obedient to him, just like we must be to God the Father, because Jesus is God the Son.
 - Let's pray...
 - [Ask for response?]