

CHRIST GOES TO GALILEE

John 4:43-54

Do you think one life makes a difference? Do you think that good can come out of something like a serious illness hitting a child or a bridge collapsing in Minneapolis? These are questions we often ponder when we observe the things that can happen in life. Today's passage in John 4 will give us some insight into these issues.

But first, since it has been several weeks since we last studied John, let us take a quick review of where we have been.

We have seen in the first four chapters of John how Jesus presented His message of salvation to two very different people. With **Nicodemus**, Jesus pointed out that all people are sinners and under the judgment and condemnation of God. There is no one capable of saving themselves.

Nicodemus, a religious man, took pride in his keeping of the Law and did not recognize his need for God's grace. But **the woman at the well** knew she was a sinner. Jesus did not mention to her that she was under judgment because she knew it. He did not need to mention it to her because while

Nicodemus needed to see himself as a sinner in order to understand grace, the woman who knew she was a sinner needed to see herself as a person of worth and value. God finds us worthy of His salvation no matter how bad we think we are, or for that matter how good we think we are. God values us enough to actively seek us, to welcome us to intimacy, and to rejoice in our worship.¹

Only a person like the Samaritan woman, who was perhaps a prostitute, or at the least a woman with very loose morals, an outcast from the people of her village, could understand what this means. “To be wanted, to be cared for when no one, not even herself, could see anything of value in her. This is grace indeed.”²

Faith did not come easily to either Nicodemus or the Samaritan woman. It was hard for Nicodemus because he had earned a reputation in the city as a righteous man. Because of this Nicodemus not surprisingly thought very highly of himself. It must be very difficult for someone who honestly thinks they have lived a good life to come to the realization that all of that effort means nothing to God as far as their salvation is concerned. They too stand

¹ Richards, Larry; Richards, Lawrence O.: *The Teacher's Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1987, S. 718.

condemned before God. Such people need the same kind of salvation as the most evil of sinners. The kind of salvation which can only come as a gift from God.

For the Samaritan woman, faith came hard because she knew she was a great sinner. Her sense of worth had been worn away. How hard it was for her to realize that God valued her, loved her, and wanted her to become His child. How difficult it must have been for her to believe that Jesus was offering her the gift of salvation with no strings attached, simply because He loved her so very much.

How great of our wonderful God! He loves us so much that He shows us people at both ends of the spectrum, the supposedly “righteous” and “good” person and the outright sinner, so that we can know that whether we are an up-and-outer or a down-and-outer God is willing to bring us into His family, His kingdom.

“Grace says to each of us, ***You count.***’ God knows you as you are, and God still cares. He cares enough to send the Son, that you might have eternal life,

² Ibid.

become His child, and worship Him.”³

Warren Wiersbe has pointed out that:

“...we might note the example Christ sets as a soul-winner. He did not allow personal prejudices or physical needs to hinder Him. He met this woman in a friendly way and did not force her into a decision. Wisely, He guided the conversation and allowed the Word to take effect in her heart. He dealt with her privately and lovingly presented the way of salvation. He captured her attention by speaking about something common and at hand—water—and used this as an illustration of eternal life. (Likewise, at the cool midnight hour, He spoke to Nicodemus about wind.) He did not avoid speaking of sin, but brought her face-to-face with her need.”⁴

³ Ibid.

“This woman did not come to faith in Christ immediately. Jesus was patient with her, and in this, He sets a good example for us in our own personal work. Certainly she was the least likely prospect for salvation, yet God used her to win almost an entire village.”⁵

Let us now continue in John chapter 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.

⁴ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1997, c1992, S. 222.

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.*

If you recall, at the beginning of chapter four (verse 3) we read that Jesus began His journey from Judea to Galilee. He stopped briefly in Samaria

⁵ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Jn 4:1

when He met the woman at the well, and now after a few days He is resuming His trip to Galilee. Let us now look more carefully at the passage beginning in verse 43.

John 4:43-45 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.

What country or town was Jesus referring to in verse 44? There is really no consensus of agreement among scholars on this question. However, it must have had some meaning that suggested it was necessary for Him to go places where He had not been known before His ministry began.

Christ went into the country of Galilee, but not to Nazareth, His hometown. He went among the villages, but would not go to Nazareth. John writes, “*Jesus himself had testified.*” What was it He testified? Jesus knew the

nature and temperament of His countrymen. He knew that they would not accept Him as a prophet of God, and would most likely feel contempt for Him. Jesus said the same thing in Luke 4:24 ESV: *"Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown."* And Matthew 13:57 ESV: *"And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.'"*

When Joseph became a prophet, he was most hated by his brothers. David was despised by his brother (1 Samuel 17:28). Jeremiah was cruelly spoken of by the men of Anathoth (Jeremiah 11:21), Paul by his countrymen the Jews; and Christ's brothers even rejected Him according to John 7:5. **Pride** and **envy** make people resent those people who used to be their equals when those people go on to attain recognition beyond what those left behind have managed to attain. It is very discouraging for a pastor to go among people who have no respect for his message or his efforts. Christ would not go to Nazareth because he knew how little respect he would receive there.

However, people must realize that those who reject the messengers lose out on the benefit of the message (Matthew 21:35, 41).

However, there were others in Galilee who were apparently quite proud of

their fellow countryman because of the miraculous works He performed at Jerusalem. At least they had enough respect for what Jesus had done that they considered Him to be deserving of listening to what He had to say. Jesus welcomed this opportunity because an open invitation to be heard often results in others accepting the message of Christ.

In verse 45 we see for the most part that the Galileans made Jesus feel welcome. This proves once again that even though many will reject the message of Christ there will be others who welcome it and even embrace it. It appears here that the reason the Galileans were so ready to receive Christ is because they had seen the miracles He performed in Jerusalem. They had gone up to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover. It was in Jerusalem they *saw* Christ's miracles, which probably encouraged many to believe as well in the message He was teaching .⁶

John 4:46-48 ESV:

*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.*

⁶ Robertson, A.T.: *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Oak Harbor : Logos Research

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.”

Why do you suppose Jesus returned to Cana (verse 46)? We cannot answer that question with any certainty, but we can be certain that He had a good reason. Cana, you may remember, is where Jesus performed His first miracle by turning water into wine at a wedding feast. Perhaps Jesus knew that first miracle would still be remembered in Cana which would mean that Jesus had some friends and followers there. Then again Jesus may have been interested in seeing what kind of fruit had been produced in the people of Cana because of His miracle, and perhaps He hoped to do a little watering of that fruit or of the seeds if they had not yet begun to grow into fully devoted followers.

We will find recorded in the book of John seven signs or miracles. These signs were not merely displays of power. On a much more profound level

Systems, 1997, S. Jn 4:43-45.

the signs or miracles that Jesus performed had a deeper significance. They carried a message that went well beyond the act itself.⁷ John MacArthur points out that turning the water into wine signified that “*Jesus is the source of life.*”⁸

If you think about this for a moment you will see the connection. This was Jesus’ first miracle and what would be more appropriate than to do something that would state exactly what His purpose in coming was all about, to provide life, eternal life? When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper the wine was set apart as a memorial of his body and blood.⁹ Jesus’ blood is the source of salvation and eternal life.

So then Jesus travels further north and arrives in Capernaum and is met by a father on an urgent mission. This father is referred to in verse 46 as an “official” which is rendered “*nobleman*” in other translations. The original Greek meaning of the text refers to one connected with the king (βασιλευς [*basileus*]), whether by blood or by office. In this passage it is probably one of the courtiers of **Herod** the tetrarch of Galilee. It could be **Chuzas** who

⁷ Op Cit. *MacArthur Study Bible*, P. 1578.

⁸ Op Cit. *MacArthur Study Bible*, P. 1579.

⁹ Easton, M.G.: Easton's Bible Dictionary. Oak Harbor, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996, c1897

was also referred to in Luke 8:3, or perhaps **Manaen** whom we find referred to in Acts 13:1. Then again it could also have been someone else.¹⁰ His son was sick and he had probably attempted every possible alternative for healing that was available in **Capernaum**. So in desperation he left there and went to the village of **Cana** hoping that the Miracle Worker he had heard about would save his son. Do not miss the fact here that this man had a deep affection for his son in that he would stop at nothing to obtain for him the help he needed.

Now this nobleman must have had a great respect for Jesus because he went to Jesus himself. He did not send a servant. One might also expect that as a nobleman he would demand or order that Jesus go to his son in order to heal him. But he did not do that. He humbly asked Jesus to come to Capernaum and heal his son. No matter how great someone is they must all humble themselves before Jesus if they desire a relationship with Him.

Verse 47 indicates the desperation this father was feeling for his dying son. But Jesus' response in verse 48 is quite surprising: "*Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.*" However, Jesus' words here in verse 48

¹⁰ Robertson, A.T.: Word Pictures in the New Testament. Oak Harbor : Logos Research

were not addressed only to the nobleman but to the Galileans as a whole.

Jesus used a plural “you” in verse 48. He moved beyond the father and spoke to everyone within earshot. He knew human hearts and their desire for flashy externals like miracles rather than sincerely taking Jesus at his word.¹¹

Jesus wanted them to understand the importance of that kind of faith. Up until this time the kind of faith they had in Jesus was probably the same kind of faith they would have in a magician, wizard, or sorcerer. Their welcome to Jesus was on the basis of signs and miraculous wonders, but did not point to faith. It was probably not until Jesus assured the nobleman that his son would live (verse 50) that the man’s faith really began to develop. Up until then it was perhaps no more than a kind of magical belief. When your son is dying, you are willing to try anything. But when faith did come it came instantly.

In verse 48 Jesus gives the basic reason why people will not believe: they want to see signs and experience wonders. Keep in mind that Satan is able to perform signs and wonders to deceive (2 Thessalonians 2:9–10). If your salvation is based on feelings, dreams, visions, voices, or any other worldly

Systems, 1997, S. Jn 4:46-47

¹¹ Hughes, Robert B. ; Laney, J. Carl ; Hughes, Robert B.: *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 2001 (The Tyndale Reference Library), S. 470.

evidence, then you are on dangerous ground. It is faith in the Word alone that gives us the assurance of eternal life. (See 1 John 5:9–13.)¹²

“*Seeing is believing*” has always been the “practical” philosophy of the unbelieving world, even the religious world. The nobleman believed that Jesus could heal his son, but he made two mistakes in his thinking: that Jesus had to go to Capernaum to save the boy, and that if the boy died meanwhile, it was too late.

Do you know what the difference is between seeing and believing? For Jesus to be believed because of his miracles (4:45) was not the kind of faith Jesus saw as honoring Him (4:44). Jesus was looking for the kind of belief that was based on faith, not only because He could perform miracles, but simply because of what He said. In John 20:29 NLT Jesus says: “*You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.*”

John 4:49-54 ESV:

49 The official said to him, “Sir, come down before my child

¹² Wiersbe, Warren W.: *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*. Wheaton,

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.

If we check out the original language text (Greek) for verse 49 we find the word used for child means *my little one*. This hints at the age of the child and also shows us the father’s feeling of tenderness toward him.¹³

Ill. : Victor Books, 1997, c1992, S. 240

¹³ Vincent, Marvin Richardson: *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Bellingham, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2002, S. 2:130.

The healing of the son in this chapter shows that salvation is by faith. The son lay dying in Capernaum, about seventeen miles away from **Cana**. The man wanted Christ to come with him, for he did not even give a thought to the possibility that Jesus could cure the boy from a distance. Jesus did not go with the man, but instead spoke the words: “*Go your way; your son lives*” (NKJV). Here was the test, the moment of truth for this father. His plan had been to bring Jesus to his house to heal his son. But now Jesus was telling him to go home without Jesus. What would the man do? Insist on his own methodology? Or believe that Jesus could heal long distance with only a word? The father chose the path of faith. The nobleman believed Jesus and went on his way.

Now, did something happen between him and Jesus and the Holy Spirit in that moment that brought him faith in Jesus as the Son of God? Or was his faith still based on a strong belief that Jesus was some kind of magician? It is worthy to note that at this time that it was one thing for someone to perform magical acts in person, but to do it from seventeen miles away would be very hard for anyone to believe. It certainly would seem that there was a special spiritual connection between Jesus and this nobleman.

The answer, recorded in verse 50, which Christ gave to the nobleman's request was meant to be a demonstration of His *power*, that He not only could heal, but could heal with such ease that He need do nothing more than speak a word. Jesus did not have to make a trip. He only had to speak or will the healing and it was done. Even though Christ is now in Heaven, and His Church is on earth, He can control all things from above. When He does deny what we ask for, He only does so because He knows in the long run that thing will not be for our own good. Instead He will give us something even better than what we asked for, even though we may not realize it at the time. We may ask God to give us a Rolls Royce luxury car, but he gives us a Chevy Malibu instead. God probably does not have anything against luxury cars, but He may know that in two years the brakes are going to fail on that particular car and result in your premature death. The Chevy may be the very best mechanically built car in the world and God knows you will be safe in it. We may ask for ease, and instead God will give us patience. And all this power may be released by just a word.

On the way back home the nobleman must have wondered what he would find when he arrived. His servants met him with the good news. His boy was alive. The father then asked when his son recovered. The healing was no

accident. It occurred at the exact moment Jesus made the promise to him. It was at the seventh hour, which by Roman time was 7:00 in the evening. The child's recovery was sudden and not gradual. The servants tell the precise time to the hour: "*Yesterday at the seventh hour, the fever left him.*" It did not begin to go down, but it left him in an instant. The word of Christ did not work like a prescription, which must have time to operate and produce the effect. No, with Christ it was a done deal immediately. He spoke and it was done. From that point the nobleman's faith was rock solid and because of his faith he brought all of his household to faith. The lesson of this passage is that Jesus' power is able to save anyone from death, even at a great distance. His Word has power to work and all people have to do to make it work for them is simply to believe His Word. Both signs in Galilee (changing the water into wine [2:1-11] and healing the official's son) demonstrate that Jesus was the Promised Messiah.¹⁴

What can we say about this nobleman's faith? We can be pretty sure that the nobleman believed Jesus could heal his son even though all the physicians had given up hope. But the verse strongly suggests that he believed Jesus

¹⁴ Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:288.

would have to physically go to the boy in order to accomplish the healing. It appears that he did not even give a thought to the possibility that Jesus could do it from a distance. This implies that in his own way he was attempting to tell Jesus how He should perform His miracles. Do we not also all too often fall into that same kind of relationship with Jesus? Do we not have a tendency to try and influence Jesus in how He should work with us rather than just trusting in Him completely? Do we not occasionally try using Jesus to get what we want? Do you know what we are doing when we do that? We are limiting the full power of Jesus from being released in our lives. We can pray to play in Jesus' orchestra, but we must not attempt to conduct. "*Lord, may thy will be done.*" End of discussion.

Bringing healing to this young boy brought salvation to the whole family. The nobleman had **believed** the word of Jesus before regarding the healing of his son, but now he believed in Christ as the promised Messiah and became one of His disciples. Through his leadership and example the whole family and household came to believe as well.

Verse 53 tells us "*he himself believed, and all his household.*" You can imagine how the mood of the whole household would have been dampened

by the severe illness of this child. Mother, siblings, servants, and possibly even extended family would have missed the noise of a young boy at play. They would have been saddened at the prospect of an ensuing funeral. Then suddenly the boy is up and out of bed, running around, laughing and playing. Think of the amazement each person felt, and the curiosity. The father had not arrived home yet. How did this come about? So when the father did arrive home and told them the details and shared his faith in Jesus, these people would have been very ready to believe in Christ also. What a fantastic change took place in this home because of the sickness of this child. This fact should help us to deal better with afflictions in our lives, knowing that good may follow from them. When great men and women receive the Gospel, they may be instrumental to bring it to all those around them.¹⁵ A comparison may be made with the mention in Acts of similar household conversions (Acts 10:2; 11:14; 16:15, 31; 18:8).¹⁶

Salvation is the beginning of miracles, for after a person is saved, God performs one miracle after another for them; and the miracles we experience

¹⁵ Henry, Matthew: *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996, c1991, S. Jn 4:43

¹⁶ Carson, D. A.: *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*. 4th ed. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994, S. Jn 4:43.

bring glory to Christ.¹⁷ For Jesus, the only prerequisite for such miracles is a person's faith in His power.¹⁸ What miracle do you need to trust him for?

¹⁷ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1997, c1992, S. 216.

¹⁸ Keener, Craig S.; InterVarsity Press: *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993, S. Jn 4:50.