

Jesus Heals The Nobleman's Son

John 4:43-54

If you've read this passage before – perhaps as I read it this morning – you have been struck by the paradoxical nature of the narration of the events and interactions which make up this healing. Perhaps you are perplexed by the tone in Jesus' responses. They are certainly brief and to the point – 2 statements made up of 19 words in translation.

Why does Jesus seem to be so disengaged with this frightened father? Why does He speak with such a sharp and indicting tone, against sign seeking and then go ahead and heal? Why did John choose this event, this miraculous sign, to include in his narration of the life of Jesus? Why did John include all of the enigmatic/paradoxical and qualifying statements in his narration of this event? What does this say about the Lord and about our response to Him? As you would expect – all of these questions are answered in the language of the text used to describe the details of this healing when understood in the greater context.

Let's take a look at the text itself!

Jesus Arrived In Galilee After A Successful Ministry Among The Samaritans – cf. 4:43 –
These are the events leading up to Jesus arrival in Galilee.

- After calling His disciples Jesus attended a wedding in Cana where He did His first miraculous sign when He turns water into wine (cf. John 1:35-2:12).

- He then returned to Jerusalem where it is said that He did many miraculous signs before the people which resulted in many who saw believing in Him (cf. 2:23-25).

- He then ministered to Nicodemus in John 3 – where the issue of Jesus' baptism as opposed to John's – becomes the occasion for a powerful statement of the new birth and for a clear statement of John decreasing and Jesus increasing.

- John 4 opens with the statement that because many Pharisees had heard that Jesus baptized more than John. It appears that Jesus left Judea for Galilee because He anticipated opposition to Him from Jewish leaders.

- It seems that Jesus traveled to Galilee through Samaria, with the intention of meeting a specific woman at the well outside of Sychar (cf. 4:3-4). It was there Jesus had an incredibly fruitful ministry among the Samaritans, who were the most despised people in all of the land. Furthermore, this incredibly fruitful ministry began with an unnamed woman whose life made her perhaps the most despised person among the Samaritans of Sychar (cf. 4:1-42). Jesus left that extremely fruitful ministry to continue on His journey to His home region of Galilee.

- John set up his narrative of this healing with a parenthetical statement – a statement which doesn't advance the narrative of events but simply gives back ground information– cf. 4:44. In

his statement in 4:44 John gives the reason for Jesus leaving Sychar and going into Galilee. John says Jesus left Sychar to continue to Galilee “*because*,” as He had previously pointed out, a prophet is without honor in His own country.

Note: Jesus left an incredibly fruitful ministry among the despised Samaritans where many believed in Him, among whom He was honored, in order to go home, among His own people, *because/for* there was no honor for Him among them!? It doesn’t get less enigmatic/paradoxical in the next verse.

- John follows the parenthetical statement of 4:44 with a “*therefore*” statement in 4:45 – “*Therefore*” when He arrived in Galilee the Galileans “*welcomed*” or honored Him “*because*” they had seen/having seen” all the things/miracles He had done in Jerusalem (cf. John 2:23-24).

- Jesus arrived in Cana – the scene of the last “sign miracle” in Galilee – and word of Jesus’ arrival reached a grieving and frightened royal official whose son was ill and near death. He traveled the about 15 miles from Capernaum to Cana to ask Jesus to come and heal his son (cf. 4:46-47). *It is thought by many that this man was a non-Jew who worked for Herod Antipas.*

Note: It is not until Jesus responds to this desperate man’s request for Jesus to heal his dying son that we begin to understand what John said in 4:44-45. The faith with which the Jews of Galilee honored Jesus was a shallow, “sign seeking” faith.

- Jesus’ response to this frightened and desperate man seems somewhat harsh and out of character (cf. 4:48). Key to a right understanding of Jesus’ response, taken in context, is the person and number of the verbal ideas – which is hidden in the English translation - “Therefore, Jesus said to him, ‘Unless you see (2nd plural) signs and wonders you will never believe’” (2nd plural).

Jesus’ response was directed to the entire “sign seeking” crowd whose faith was not directed toward Jesus but toward the miracles He did/provided. However, the man was about to be set apart from the “sign seekers.” This is John 1:10-13 being worked out in this text.

- The man persisted in his desperate request for Jesus to heal his son (cf. 4:49-53). If you had asked the man why he came he wouldn’t have given a noble answer like, “I just want to worship Jesus.” OR “I want Jesus to have a chance to receive glory in the healing of my son.” OR EVEN “I came because I love Jesus.” He was hurting, frightened and desperate for his son. He came because he had heard that this Jesus who worked miracles was in Cana, only a day’s journey from him. He knew the time was short for his son so he went – hoping against hope that Jesus would have compassion and come back with him in time to heal his son (“Come before my son dies!” – cf. 4:49).

- The nature of the man's faith set him apart from the sign seekers. Jesus simply said "Go, your son lives" (cf. 4:50a). The Scripture says – "The man **believed the word** which Jesus spoke to him and he went" (cf. 4:50b).

Because it was late in the day – the man's return required that he stay the night on the road back. The following day, as the man was traveling back – imagine the mix of emotions with his every step – perhaps a rising hope with joy, while he heard the Lord's word resonating in his head – perhaps in moments of weakness doubt crept in. Then it happened – he saw his servants approaching on the road to meet him. Were they bringing good news or bad news – "They greeted him saying, "Your son lives/is alive!!" Could it be that Jesus simply spoke the word and the disease that would've certainly claimed his life left him? Could it be that with a single word Jesus healed his dying son? When did his son get better? The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour – the very moment Jesus spoke!!

What Purpose Does This Narrative Serve In John's Gospel And What Is He Telling Us About Jesus? – cf. 20:30-31

- The purpose for John's gospel is the purpose for Jesus' every sign miracle, His every discourse or exchange and for every one of the "I am" statements preserved in the gospel. That purpose is found in clearly stated in 20:30-31. John records all that he does in the way that he does to lead his readers – you and me – to "saving faith."

The overarching message or revelation of Jesus which John makes clear in his gospel – which we are called to embrace by faith and be saved – is that Jesus is the Promised One of God – Messiah; that He is the Divine Son of God incarnate and that He is our Savior/Redeemer.

Note: As blessed as these big gospel truths are to all true believers they are made up of sweet truths with incredibly personal application – truths applicable to each of us in all of our various life circumstances.

- Jesus came for this very reason!! This miraculous healing does not hang out there as an independent display of God's power. Every promise Jesus makes, every declaration of love, every hope of life He offers, every display of power – whether it is healing the sick, turning water to wine, turning a child's lunch of bread and fish into a feast for more than five thousand, casting out demons or raising the dead – or the promise of John 11:25-26 or 14:1-6 or any other gospel promise - it is all done in anticipation of what Jesus would do on the cross.

Jesus, in this sign miracle, reveals the heart of a loving and compassionate Father who has heard the cries of a suffering humanity and is committed, at all cost, to meet us in our suffering and conquer it. ***The Father had to give His Son – He had to put all of the sin of man and the curse it brought, all of humanity's suffering, every death of every person – and all of the grief it brought – all of it on Jesus so that Jesus could say to a frightened and desperate father, "Go –***

your son lives.” This moment is filled with the love and compassion of the cross – cf. 2 Timothy 1:8-10; Hebrews 2:9-10, 14-18; 1 John 3:8

- Because that is true – Jesus looked upon this father, desperate for his son’s healing and life, with the personal love and kindness of His Father – ***a love and kindness that sought to alleviate his suffering in such a way as to draw him to faith.*** This loving word of the cross was spoken to give ***eternal life.*** ***Jesus was giving Himself to this man and His family in the most profound and intimate way!!*** – cf. Romans 8:31-32, 35-39; also Ephesians 2:4-7.

What Is John/Jesus Telling Us About Our Response To Jesus – Our Faith? – cf. 4:44, 48

- Beware of the faith which seeks Jesus for the “miracle” He might do – cf. John 12:9-10, 17-19 – This is an incredibly shallow basis for our faith and it is sure to fail. We are told that if only we have enough faith we release/loose the power of Jesus to work miraculous healings and even to raise the dead.

Jesus didn’t simply heal this man’s son out of a desire to alleviate his suffering in the moment. He sought to birth a saving faith in this man’s heart and in the heart of his family – a faith that brought resurrection and life. The story doesn’t end here for this man and his son. They would both grow older and one day this boy would sit at his father’s bed and hold his hand as he breathed his last – grief and tears would follow. In fact, this son likely became a husband and father himself – perhaps he had a child or wife who fell ill and died. Certainly he died with loved ones by his side. Today – if you and I could speak with this father he would say to us – ***“My son lives!!”***

May I say that anyone can have faith enough to heal the one we love but it takes a deep and relational faith that is strong enough to walk through the death of a child or a spouse or to watch your own body and to die a piece at a time. That is the faith that knows Him so intimately and trusts Him so absolutely that we not only long for that day but we are able to see it in such a way as to bring the reality of its hope into the most difficult moments. Loneliness and fear give way to the sense of belonging and safety that the profound presence of the One who loves me/us perfectly which is available by faith – the faith that seeks Him. He is the reward of such a faith. That is the faith of a deep and intimate relationship with the perfect lover of your soul – so deep and soul satisfying that you long to be with Him more than to remain behind (cf. Philippians 1:20-21; 3:7-14; 2 Timothy 4:6-8)

- Beware of the faith that seeks Jesus and presents Jesus for the temporal blessings He brings to life here - cf. John 6:25-27; Philippians 4:10-13; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Romans 8:17-18 – If you could have every single thing Jesus offered in this life and the life to come without Jesus – would

you be content. Perhaps it's more telling to ask – if you had to give up all that this life offered but you could have an intimacy with Jesus beyond imagination in this life and joy in Him forever more – would He be enough?