

John 4: 46-54; “Building a Father’s Faith”, A Sermon for Father’s Day,
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 19th, 2022,
In the Morning Worship Service.

There are certain miracles which Jesus did during the time of His earthly ministry which are called signs. Verse 54 of our text says – “This again is the second sign Jesus did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.” The word is σημειον (say-mi-on) in the Greek and it is mentioned in John 2: 11 as well, in this way, after Jesus turned the water into wine: This beginning of signs Jesus did in Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him. The turning of water into wine and the healing of this nobleman’s son were sign miracles. They were intended to speak to something even greater than the wonder itself which was performed.

They were intended to set forth the truth that all mankind needs what Christ alone can bring to them. Christ alone can take the most joyful events of life, such as a wedding, and show that He alone can supply is lacking; that is, wine that would make the hearts of the people there glad that day. And Christ alone can take one of the saddest and most difficult situations of life such as this nobleman’s son being sick and at the point of death, and bring not only physical healing out of it, but also spiritual healing; the kind of healing where faith was created, and built in a father’s heart, and other people in his family were saved.

This is what I want to bring to your attention. So, 1st of all – I want to speak to you about this father’s faith in miracles. 2nd – I will speak to you about this father’s faith in Jesus’ word. And 3rd – I want to show you the importance of this father’s faith in influencing all in his family to believe in Jesus as well. Let us think about our own faith as we listen to this message, and ask ourselves how strong it is.

1st of all – I want to speak to you about this father’s faith in miracles. (verses 46-49)

Jesus, it says here, came again to Cana of Galilee once again; the place where he had turned the water into wine at the wedding that He attended there. And this certain man, a nobleman, came to Him from Capernaum to ask if He might come back with him to Capernaum so that He could heal his son. I believe that we should see this as a very good thing; that this nobleman (this high official) would be willing to travel the 20-25 miles, to seek Jesus out because he believed that Jesus could do this great thing and heal his son. He was wealthy enough that he could have sent his servants. Instead he came himself.

The reason for this was his great concern for his son. This was not an errand to be run by someone else. This was a personal matter with him. His son was sick and at the point of death. And this nobleman, when had heard of the great things that Jesus had been doing in healing others, he said to himself: If He has done this for others, can’t He heal my son as well? I will go to Jesus. He came to Jesus in faith, to find out for himself, whether Jesus could do this great thing for him personally, and heal his precious son, in particular. He had what is called – The faith of miracles. He believed in God, and he believed that this prophet Jesus really could do miracles. He had thus far reasoned the matter through correctly.

There are many people out there who have a general faith in God, as this man did, and it is a good thing that they have it, for it may lead them on to saving faith in Christ. It says in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 6 – Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. This man was acting on this principle, for it says in verse 47 that he went to Jesus and implored Him to come down and heal his son. This is a very strong word, the word implored. It means that he asked him in pleading terms. He begged Jesus to come and do this for him.

It was almost a prayer. And yet there were some things that he still had to learn about the Lord Jesus before he could be saved and become a follower of Jesus. What was most important to him at this point was his son's continuing to live. What was most important to Jesus was his soul, and his salvation, and the salvation of his family members. You see, there are a great many people who have a general faith in God who have a greater concern for the healing of the body than they do for the salvation of their soul, or the souls of others. Their priorities are not right because they are earth bound in their conception of life. They do not understand, when they are first coming to Jesus to make request of Him, that the most important miracle is not the healing of the body. It is the healing of the sin-sick soul.

And this is why our Lord Jesus gently rebuked him and the other people who were standing by watching this conversation. He wanted to produce saving faith in this man, as well as to heal his son. Jesus gently rebukes him in verse 48, when He says – Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe. The word “people” is not in the original. And the word “you” here in this verse is plural. And so Jesus is saying that none of them would believe with saving faith unless they saw signs and wonders. He knew that many of them had a “prove it to me” mentality when it came to faith.

This is why in Matthew chapter 12, verse 38 when some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.” He said to them – “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Jesus knew that the scribes and Pharisees were not believing in Him. And so, when He gave them the sign of Jonah, He was trying to direct their attention to Himself and His own ministry; of His coming to lay down His life for sinners, and His taking it up again.

But this nobleman was different than the scribes and the Pharisees. He was coming to Jesus for the healing of his son. He loved his son. He did not want to lose His son, and so Jesus wanted to teach Him about faith. He said – Unless you see signs and wonders you simply will not believe. That is the way that all men are by nature. They are unbelieving, unless they see a sign. Jesus wanted to create saving faith in this father, and then build in him that kind of faith which would trust in Him, even when he could not see; even when he could not understand. He wants to do the same in you and me.

You will remember that doubting Thomas had faith in Jesus. He even had saving faith in Him when Jesus was crucified. But when others came to him after Jesus was raised from the dead, he did not believe their testimony that He was alive. He said – Unless I can put my fingers in the print where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe. When Jesus finally chose to reveal Himself to Thomas, He immediately confronted him with this statement and asked him to do it. But Thomas was convinced because he had seen. And so Jesus said to him in John 20: 29, after Thomas exclaimed – My Lord and My God!, He said to him – Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

That is the kind of faith that the Lord would build into each one of us! It is the kind of faith that even though we do not see how or why, yet we will believe in the Lord Jesus. Jesus is saying here that their having faith in the miracles which God does through Him is indeed necessary for the salvation of the soul. But a person's believing in those miracles alone without looking further to Jesus to have your faith be directed into steadfastness of obedience to His word, this will not save. Look unto Him all you ends of the earth, and you will be saved.

The proof of this is when Jesus fed the 5,000 with the five loaves and 2 fishes. Many thousands of people believed in Jesus and they followed Him around for a time until He began to teach them that He was bread which came down from heaven. (John 6: 32) When he would teach them about His being the bread of life, and how they had to eat His flesh and drink His blood to have eternal life, then it says in John 6: 66 that from that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. So

when people say that they believe in Jesus, and that they want Him to heal their loved one, or feed them earthly food all of the time, He will always test that faith to see whether they really want to trust Him enough to receive His teaching.

When this father heard Jesus statement about the signs and wonders, he said – Sir, come down before my child dies! Jesus knew then that this was not a selfish request. The man was willing to be taught. Here was a man who was willing to do His will. His appeal to Jesus to come down before the child died, it came home to the heart of Jesus. He knew then, that He would give him all that he was asking for and much more, even eternal life for him and his entire family. This is the way that it always is with the Lord Jesus. He wants to know whether you really want Him to help you by His teaching you.

Are you willing to be taught more of His good and perfect way? “If any man is willing to do His will, He shall know of concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether Jesus spoke on His own authority.” (John 7: 17)

2nd – I want to speak to you about this father’s faith in Jesus’ word.

Verse 50 – “Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your son lives.’” “The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he started off.” This is the essence of saving faith in exercise. It is believing the word of the Lord and then starting to obey Him. “Your sons lives” was a word of authority, and the nobleman did not question it. It was a word of power and so He acted upon it immediately. Saving faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ, or the word concerning Christ. He was content to rest all of his hope for his son’s recovery upon this word from Jesus. It was enough that Jesus said it. He would have a joyful trip home knowing that his son would be alive and well when he arrived home.

“He who hears My word, and believes in Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” John 5: 24. The reason that the man believed Jesus’ word was that he believed in Jesus Himself, as the great and blessed Personage that He is. Even though he did not know of how Jesus could be God and Man, 2 natures in one blessed Person, still he knew that in the word of a King there was power. He believed that Jesus was the promised fulfillment of the Promises. He believed that he was the Messiah. He believed that Jesus was the King of glory.

I infer all of this because it is evident that the word came forth to his heart and mind with great and convincing power. Even though he not yet seen his son, yet he believed that he was healed because Jesus said he was healed. Ah, there is comfort in that kind of faith. Some of you may have come to Christ looking for something else besides salvation. You wanted His help or His healing for yourself, or for one of your friends or loved ones. You came to church, praying and looking for answers. And you found far more than you ever bargained for. You heard Christ being preached, and when believed the word of truth in the gospel, you found that Jesus would teach you everything that you needed to learn to live to the glory of God. He would take you just as you were, and change your heart and mind so that you would receive His word and begin living according to that word immediately.

When you came to Christ you received His word because it came from the One who helps you to understand God better. When you first came to Him you may not have understood, even as this man did not understand, at first, that Jesus does not need to come down to where you live to understand your situation. He can speak the word, and heal and save, right from where He is today, in heaven. This ought to be a great comfort to all of you fathers here today, who have sin-sick children; children who are feverish and close to eternal death because of false things that they have believed. Let this true story be a means to strengthen your faith and add fuel to the fire of your lifting up your prayers to Him for your son or daughter to be saved.

3rd – I want to show you the importance of this father’s faith in influencing all in his family to believe in Jesus as well.

Verse 51 says – “And as he was going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, ‘Your son lives!’” “Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better.” “And they said to him, ‘Yesterday at

the seventh hour the fever left him.” “So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, ‘Your son lives.’ “And he himself believed and his whole household.” Now, I want you to observe the progression in this passage as it regards this nobleman’s faith. It says in verse 50 that this nobleman believed in the word that Jesus spoke to him. Here in verse 53 it says that he himself believed, and his whole household.

We see from this that there are stages in the exercise of faith which bring the believer to a certainty of faith, and to a full assurance of faith and salvation. This nobleman was led into this by Christ Himself. He had a general faith in God to begin with, when he first came to Jesus asking for His help. Then, when Jesus told him that His son lived, and that he should go his way, he believed this by faith, resting upon the word of Jesus alone to calm and assure his heart and mind that this was so. And now he finds the absolute confirmation of the truth that his son lived, being told that it was so by the servants.

What his servants were saying was a witness to the truth of all that Jesus had already told him. Their words were confirming evidence and echoes of Jesus’ actual words. And so we know that his faith was strengthened even more yet. In Hebrews 11: 1, it says – “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen,” it says in the New American Standard translation. In the New King James and the ESV it says that “faith is the substance of the things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.”

The nobleman may not have known it, but he was saved from all of his sins when he first believed the word that Jesus told him concerning his son. It was Jesus’ saying to him – I am not only your son’s healer, I am your soul’s salvation. It is faith in Jesus Himself and faith in His word which saves spiritually, even though not all of the implications of this are understood by the person being saved, at once. In his obtaining the answer to his prayers for his son, he was given something far more wonderful yet; the spiritual salvation of his own soul.

The assurance of this nobleman’s son being healed was conveyed to him in a very wonderful way. His servants meet him on the way home and they use the very words which Jesus did, when he told him, that he could go on his way. They say to him – Your son lives! He rightly wants to know the hour in which he got better. They tell him, yesterday at the seventh hour. This was the very hour that Jesus had said to him that his son lived. Therefore it was fully confirmed to him that his son was indeed healed, even though he had not yet seen him.

The words of his servants were echoes of confirmation that his son was healed, but they were more yet. They became the opportunity for the nobleman to speak of the glory of Christ; of His compassion, His omniscience, His omnipotence, His mercy, His power, and His love in all that He did for both his son, and himself. And hearing these things, his whole family and his servants believed in Christ for themselves. Let us take heart from these things to believe that these things were written so that we might believe that our Lord Jesus is able to hear the prayers and pleadings of the fathers in this place, that their sin-sick children might be saved. This would be the greatest present a godly father could ever have.