

John 4:43-54

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[0 : 00] Our text for today, as we continue our study of John's gospel, is John chapter 4, verses 43 through 54, there to the end of the chapter.

In today's text, we will observe the second sign or miracle performed by Jesus in Cana and recorded by John.

This is the second of eight major miracles that John records for us. Certainly not the only miracles. There's mention of others, and we'll reference that later in chapter 2, but the second of the eight major ones that he puts down.

This passage bookends the chiasmic literary structure of chapters 2 through 4. If you have no idea what I'm talking about when I say chiasmic literary structure, I'm not going to explain it today, but I would love for you to come ask me about it.

I will nerd with you if you'd like to know what I mean by this. An incredible thing happening here and in many other texts. These two miracles, though, right, were always meant.

[1 : 10] The intention of them is to point people to the miracle worker. Jesus is going about and doing signs. He is teaching.

And all of this is meant to draw people to him. They were meant to lead people to the one who works in the greatest of all miracles in the hearts of men.

The birth of belief. The bringing of spiritually dead people to spiritual life. We live in an age where people are constantly looking for miracles.

And I'm not one that would suggest to you that they have entirely ceased. But the biggest miracle, the most important thing that we ought to be setting our sights on is people placing believing faith in Christ.

John's gospel deals with this very thought thematically all throughout. You'll see rejection and accepting of Jesus. In John chapter 20, verse 30 and following, he says, Now Jesus did many other signs, or think miracles, in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book.

[2 : 29] 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.

We hold to a doctrine called justification by faith alone. And for most of you, this is probably a fairly obvious thing.

And perhaps maybe even in some measure assumed. But you need to know that we are unique in the world. To believe that we, to be restored to God, to be justified, declared righteous.

Having the penalty of our sin put away, and the perfect keeping of the law given to us. This is what it means to be righteous. That this is achieved by faith alone.

The object of that faith is the person and work of Jesus Christ. To believe that he is who he said that he is. And to recognize that it's his perfect keeping of the law, and his sacrificial death on our behalf.

[3 : 41] His third day raising. His now seating at the right hand of the Father of God. All of this grants to us restored relationship with God.

We ought not to believe. We ought not to grow tired of thinking about this doctrine. Justification by faith alone. And we should think about what does it mean to believe so that we can have life in Jesus' name.

This text deals with that very issue. Before I read it for us, let me lead us in a prayer. Father, we would ask that you would help us as we take up your word together this morning.

Put our noses in this text for these few moments that we have. That we would be transformed by it. From one degree of glory to another.

We want to rightly understand your word this morning. We want it carefully applied to our hearts. We humbly recognize that every one of us needs to hear what it has to say today.

[4 : 54] We know that it was written for your glory. Firstly, for your glory that you would be known. And as it follows, our good. So help us, I pray, that we would believe its promises and obey its commands.

And that we would have affection for you, its author. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

Amen. John chapter 4, beginning in verse 43 and to the end of the chapter.

After the two days, he departed from 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. 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.

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. So Jesus said to him, So he asked them the hour when he began to get better.

[6 : 32] And they said to him, yesterday at the seventh hour, the fever left him. The father knew that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, your son will live.

And he himself believed and all his household. This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

I have a very simple outline for this morning. And I think, although I'm often wrong when I think this, but I think brief comments. So the outline will be as following.

Number one, unbelief observed. Number two, unbelief confronted. And number three, unbelief overcome.

First, unbelief observed. Notice in verse 43, John says, After the two days he departed for Galilee. He had been in Samaria previously to this and had an encounter with a Samaritan woman at the well.

[7 : 38] If you're unfamiliar with the story, it's such a picture of Christ's mercy for great sinners. All of us need to be reminded of his surpassing great mercy over our great sin.

And this woman goes and shares the Christ. I think I found him. He's at the well. And many Samaritans profess faith in Jesus. And they ask him to stay with them.

And he remains there for two days. So it's after those two days that he departs for Galilee. This is the region that we're going to see him doing most of his ministry in, in John's gospel.

And then John adds, Now there's a lot of debate I've discovered over the Greek word hometown and exactly what they meant by this.

It's most likely referring to just generically the place that he's from. And so I think that John's referring to Galilee itself.

[8 : 47] Right? So he's going back to a place where we're going to see again and again and again rejection of Jesus. Now to show you an example of this, I'd like for you to join me in Luke chapter 4.

Don't lose your spot here, but go with me to Luke chapter 4. Another time Jesus uses this same phrase. A prophet having no honor in his hometown.

Here we see him actually go to Nazareth in the way that we would think of hometown. Luke chapter 4 beginning in verse 14.

Here Luke records, And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee. And a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. And he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.

[9 : 55] And he unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written. And this is Isaiah chapter 61, which was read earlier this morning. Jesus reads, verse 18, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

And he rolled up a scroll and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

It's an astounding thing. He's the fulfillment of Isaiah 61. The Spirit of the Lord on him, coming to breed the good news of the kingdom. Verse 22 says, And all spoke well of him, and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth.

And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said to them, Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, Position, heal yourself, what we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.

[11:18] So they ask of him to do signs. They're looking for miracles. It seems to make a bit of sense that they would, because if you go back up to that, Isaiah 61, verse 18, He's been anointed to proclaim good news to the poor, to set at liberty captives, to give sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed.

They're looking for some visible sign that this is actually true. It seems to be what they're asking for, but Jesus knows their heart.

As he says in verse 24, Truly I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. That should sound familiar. He goes on.

Remember, they're finding great favor with him. They're speaking well of him. They know it's Joseph's son. They speak well of him. Surely you'll say to me, show us signs, is what they're asking for.

And Jesus says this, verse 25, But in truth I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land.

[12:39] And Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. So who Elijah was sent to, to help, is significant here.

He goes on. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha. And none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. That's significant.

Who is it? The leper that was cleansed was Naaman the Syrian, and the widow that Elijah was sent to was Zarephath the Sidon, both of whom were not Jewish.

That's the significant thing that's happening here. Both of them are not Jewish. And watch the response of those in Nazareth. When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.

And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built so that they could throw him down the cliff.

[13:52] But passing through their midst, he went away. They turn on a dime on Jesus. They're marveling at him.

They want something from him. They want Jesus. But they don't want Jesus on his terms. He was a prophet from God.

He spoke from God. And he uses the example of two prophets sent by God to a people who were not the Jews. And it made them furious.

I didn't want Jesus on his terms. And beloved, we must have Jesus on his terms. Not merely for what we can get from him, but for who he is.

All over this nation this morning, there's a gospel being peddled that I call the soft prosperity gospel. You want your life to look a little better.

[14:58] You want things to be sorted out. Relationships and jobs. Children. If you want those things, you've got this guy named Jesus and you can sprinkle a little of him on anything going on in your life and it's going to sort out.

Has God given us wisdom? We can take up and read and understand. If we follow that wisdom, do things tend to go well? They do. They can.

But this is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. He's going to say astounding things about taking up your cross and following him. Dying. Giving of yourself every ounce of who you are.

Eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood. In a few chapters, he's going to be abandoned by people who are professing disciples because they don't understand what he's saying and the things he's saying are way too hard for them.

They want what they think he can offer, but they don't want him. And that's what we see going on here. Right?

[16:10] So verse 44, back in our text, John chapter 4, Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his hometown, the place that he's from.

And then verse 45 says, So. So ties the following information to the previous information. If you don't read this rightly, you'll be very confused. It says, 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.

You could read that and go, well, wait a minute. He's being welcomed. It seems that he's not being rejected in his hometown, but rather being welcomed.

He was welcomed, to be sure, but why? They did not welcome the whole Christ. They didn't want all of him and everything that he was going to say, but they rather welcomed him for what he could accomplish for them.

[17 : 19] So I mentioned that we would reference this other miracles we've seen. John chapter 2, verse 23, when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.

So here we have another group. They've seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast because they had also gone to the feast. That's referencing what's happening here in John chapter 2.

Many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. It seems to be an expression, some measure of faith. But Jesus, on his part, verse 24 says, did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

The Greek word for believed in verse 23 of John 2 and the Greek word for entrust in verse 24 of John 2 is the exact same word.

Jesus didn't have faith in their faith. He didn't believe in their believing. Not, John tells us, because he just doubted it, but because he knew what was in man.

[18 : 42] They were amazed by the miracles and they wanted more of that, but they didn't want Jesus himself.

So, in this text, which, just as a side note, is also itself chiastic within chapters 2 and 4, verse 46 says, So he came again to Cana in Galilee, a city in Galilee, where he had made the water wine, where a miracle had been performed, a sign.

And that's setting the stage for this next scene that happens. So there's unbelief that's observed. Then we see unbelief confronted.

So, at Capernaum, there was an official whose son is ill. When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him, so he's in Cana, about 16 miles.

This was a journey that was southward, but uphill. So you're going to see him go back down to Capernaum. But he went up to where Jesus was in Cana, and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.

[20 : 09] His official is coming to Jesus. He's perhaps witnessed the miracle at Cana some maybe months, weeks earlier. Or he's heard about it.

This man seems to have the ability to heal my son. But we can note from this text that this official asks, and he asks it with a weak faith, for two reasons.

First, he believed that Jesus had to be present to perform this miracle. You see that in verses 47 and verse 49. He asked him to come down. And then he says in verse 49, Sir, come down.

His power had to be present with his son in order to heal him. He hasn't fully comprehended the power of Jesus to heal. Second reason his faith is weak is that he didn't believe that Jesus could raise him from the dead.

Verse 49 again, Sir, come down before my child dies. So it's a weak faith that he asks with, but it is a sufficient faith.

[21 : 25] If your faith, your belief ever falters, I know that mine does. And I'm so thankful for these stories that show us sufficient faith.

A little clue to that end also found in verse 47. The phrase asked him, some translations say implored him, which I think is a better word there, because it's in the imperfect tense, which suggests that he asked him over and over and over again.

It's probable that he didn't just come this one time and asked him, but that he had asked him and asked him and asked him. And then what we're observing is Jesus' response to him.

So he's got a weak faith. It's a sufficient faith, because Jesus says to him, go, your son will live.

But between him asking and Jesus offering to him the healing of his son, he says in verse 48, unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.

[22 : 43] You're looking for the wrong thing. It's not a bad thing to request the healing of your son. It's good that we would advocate for our children. Jesus is saying to him, you're missing the point.

Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. So, we see this official as an example. He's coming and looking for signs and wonders, but then he also gets juxtaposed against all of these others, all of the others that were trying to accept Jesus on the wrong terms because we see his unbelief overcome.

This is the third point. So, he leaves. It says, as he was going down, again, he's descending from the hill town of Cana, his servants met him.

They came to where he was to report news to him and they encountered each other on the road and they told him that his son was recovering. And he wonders, why?

[23 : 50] Why is my son recovering? That's why he asked this question. What was the hour when he began to get better? And they said to him, yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him.

This would have been about one o'clock in the afternoon. And so, this man, this is about a 16-mile journey, seems to have left the following days.

They very rarely traveled on the roads at night. It was dangerous to do so. Perhaps, this man, we can observe, maybe, some measure of faith. He's believing when Jesus says, go, your son will live. Maybe he tarries for a little while and he learns some more from Jesus. We don't know to be sure.

But it's the following day that he meets with his servants on the road and finds out this, verse 53 says, he knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, your son will live.

And he himself believed. I don't think we should read this any other way than to know that he placed his faith in Christ.

[25 : 00] The way this story is being told, this is the clear, obvious assumption to be made. He himself believed and all his household.

A faith that is weak, that is overcome as he recognizes who Jesus is. Then we have a footnote in verse 54.

This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee. back to the same spot. It's a clue to archaism there in that last verse.

Now, let's think a bit about the application of this short story. Number one, belief must move from signs to the Savior.

It must move from signs to the Savior. We must place our faith in Christ himself person and work on our behalf.

[26 : 09] It's opportunity here to examine our own hearts. Whether you've ever believed in Christ or you have to think do we follow Jesus for what he gives or for who he is?

He's going to tell us later in John. He's going to define eternal life for us. John has said the purpose of this book is that we believe so that we can have eternal life. And Jesus defines eternal life for us and it is knowing God.

Do we place our faith in Jesus because we want him or just what he can really offer to us? Saving faith rests in God's word, not in our sight.

faith in faith in faith in faith in faith in what he has said is true.

Belief must move from signs to the Savior. Secondly, trials are God's means of maturing our belief.

[27 : 22] This runs a little bit adjacent to the text, but I think it's worth noting. worth mentioning. We should, beloved, see our trials as opportunities to lean on Christ's sufficiency.

Again and again and again, God allows, our sovereign God, our providential God, allows things in our life that press at us because he loves us enough to say to us, I am enough.

Opportunities, take them up. I don't want to suffer. I don't want to go through difficult things on at least five different issues.

This past week has been a difficult week. It has been harder than I feel like I deserve. It's been hard. I should take them up as opportunities.

God, what are you, working into me through difficult circumstances? Christ's efficiency. Jesus is enough, more than enough, abundantly enough, and God cares about us enough to teach us this good truth.

[28 : 39] Trials are not signs of God's absence, but they're an invitation from him to trust him deeper. Thirdly, belief rests on the word of Christ alone.

I said a little bit to that a moment ago. Jesus said simply, go, your son will live. And the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him.

He's at a distance from him. This is something to marvel at, even though it's imperfect faith. This official believed when Jesus said, go, your son will live.

The essence of following Jesus, to just take him at his word, be true, to take it up and to read it and say, it must be true, it's God's word. I should merely obey and trust that it's going to work the way God has said it would work.

Fourth, belief grows and multiplies. The man believed and then all of his household believed.

[29 : 56] A seed of trust became a tree of salvation for his family. This man must have said, listen to this man that I met.

look at what he's accomplished. Let me tell you more. This is why I hope my sanctified imagination thinks that he lingered on and learned a bit more from Jesus or from his disciples to see his family also place their faith in Christ.

Husbands, fathers, mothers, we ought to let our belief be visible and contagious. in our homes.

We ought to talk often and we ought to talk with great affection for our Savior. It's lunacy to believe that we were utterly cut off from God, separated forever, that our final place would be a place of torment, and that we've been saved by Christ.

It's crazy for us not to want to talk about that. to share it regularly and with great zeal. Church members, let your trust in Christ encourage the body of Christ.

[31 : 20] We all need our belief bolstered. I need it every time I'm with you and all the times in between. Let your trust in Christ press one another on.

Real belief is fruitful. people. Fifth and lastly, Christ's word transcends space, time, and circumstance.

The healing happened at the very hour that Jesus spoke, though he was miles away. His authority is sovereign and it is unlimited.

committed. Therefore, we can trust that Christ's promises hold true across centuries, across cultures, across any and every circumstance.

His word will not fail. a single example of this. This has been in my mind much this week.

[32 : 30] Jesus says, I will never leave you nor forsake you. Hebrews 13, 5. I will never leave you nor forsake you.

That is true regardless of when he said it to today or whether or not we're Jewish or otherwise or what circumstance we find ourselves in the middle of.

If we belong to him, that is a sure promise for us. We need things by the word of his power.

And so we have opportunity as we look at a short little story like this to see the rejection of some welcoming Jesus only for what he offers.

The alternative, the belief, placing belief in Christ himself. Let's pray to the end that would be true of all of us this morning.