

Text: John 4:46-54

Title: “Take Jesus at His Word”

INTRODUCTION

We don't live very long before we realize that in life we constantly bump up against things that we cannot fix or change no matter how hard we try ... an illness we can't seem to get over ... a son or daughter who has chosen a lifestyle that breaks our heart ... a sin that keeps tripping us up over and over ... a financial hole we can't seem to get out of ... you know what I mean. It is into this broken world that Jesus came, and He reveals Himself at the intersection of our weakness and His power.

Let's open our Bibles this morning to John 4:46. This summer I'm doing a series of messages on the miracles of Jesus that are recorded by John in his Gospel. And these miracles all happen at the intersection of human weakness and divine power.

The Apostle John has a particular message in mind for his readers and he chose these seven miracles to deliberately point people to faith in Jesus. Later in his Gospel John will say...

John 20:30-31 - Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

That was John's goal in recording these events, and it is my goal in preaching this series. I long for those of you who are not saved to be saved by believing in Christ and finding life in His name. I long for those of you who have been followers of Jesus for six months or sixty years to be encouraged to keep trusting Jesus ... to live every day by faith in Christ. So let's look at this next miracle in John's Gospel.

John 4:46 - Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum.

People were still talking about the first miracle Jesus performed at the wedding in Cana when he turned the water into wine. So Jesus returns to Cana where He encounters a “certain royal official, a man of great importance, probably in the court of King Herod. His home is in Capernaum and his son is critically ill there.

John 4:47 - When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

News spread quickly about Jesus. Not only had he performed the first miracle at the wedding in Cana, but Jesus had just come from Jerusalem where we know that He performed many other miracles. Word has reached this royal official; they've exhausted every other remedy for their son. They're desperate; the son is near death. Jesus may be there last hope.

Notice the verbs describing this father's actions: He heard, he went and he begged. Literally the man kept on begging Jesus to come quickly to the help of his son. The father will not take “no” for an answer.

Here is a great picture of prayer. We're like this father who comes and cries out to Jesus. We hear the truth that God can change things in our lives. By faith we respond to what we know about Jesus. We leave the need and go to Jesus to bring our need before Him. That's what prayer is.

Here is an encounter between a man and Jesus that occurs in Cana, but it involves a need in Capernaum, about twenty miles away. He went before Jesus *here* for a need that existed *there*. From our place of prayer we can impact things far away. Prayer is life's limitless reach.

ILLUSTRATION –Countless believers around the world have been praying for Dr. Kent Brantly and Nancy Writebol, both medical missionary serving in a hospital in Liberia when they contracted the deadly Ebola virus, a virus that is nearly always lethal. By the way Kent is related to the Tom Cleveland family here in our church, and his children were in our CELC before they went to Africa. All around the world people are praying for Kent and Nancy. We can't go to Africa to help them, nor do we have the power to help them, but Jesus is there by His Spirit and He has the power to help him ... the power that is unleashed when people pray. Well I felt like I was watching an answer to prayer last night when I saw the video footage of Kent getting out of an ambulance having been flown by a special charter plane to a hospital in Georgia ... a walking miracle.

Now Jesus says something to this father in John 4 that at first seems to be a rebuke of the man.

John 4:48 - “Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, “you will never believe.”

Apparently a crowd has gathered around Jesus and the royal official. And He knows that many of the people present were there just to see a miracle for the sake of seeing a miracle. But Jesus will not dazzle them this day with a miracle on the spot, as we'll see in a minute.

John 4:49 - The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.”

The man is getting emotional at this point. “This is my boy; he's dying. Please come quickly!” The father doesn't fully understand the power of Jesus at this point. He thinks the only way Jesus could help was for Jesus to actually go to Capernaum. So can you imagine the father's surprise when...

John 4:50 - Jesus replied, “You may go. Your son will live.” The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

Actually the NIV here doesn't accurately capture what Jesus said. It wasn't that Jesus said “you may go.” It was a command ... “Go.” Jesus made a promise and commanded the man to act on that promise by leaving Jesus and going home.

Here is faith ... taking Jesus at His Word ... trusting that what Jesus says is true. The greatest faith is the faith that simply stands on the word of Jesus, even when there is no evidence. Faith is living in the assurance that God's Word is true in spite of feelings or circumstances.

Maybe you're facing a situation today where you feel things are, like this child, "close to death"? Jesus has the power to turn things around. Get in the word of God and anchor your life to the rich promises of God that you find there.

Now this man faces a crisis of belief ... a test of his faith. He has the word of Jesus that the boy will live ... but it will be some time before he can see if it really happened as Jesus promised. He doesn't know how his son is doing. He just has a word from Jesus. Meanwhile he will have to wait for several hours to know the outcome. The man may have had to spend the night before starting home. If so, what a long night, and what a long walk home. "I know Jesus said my son will live, but will he?" And you and I will have our faith tested. When we lay hold of a promise of God in His Word we may not see the answer immediately. It's that waiting time when our faith is tested.

The big question is can I do what this father did ... simply take Jesus at His word that everything will be work out and go on my way in peace?

John 4:51 - While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living.

So the royal official on his road home to Capernaum is met by his servant. He has great news; the boy lives. The servant reports exactly what Jesus said would happen ... the boy will live. Now the official begins to put two and two together.

John 4:52 - When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour."

The dad starts doing the math ...

John 4:53a - Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live."

This was no mere coincidence. It happened at the very moment Jesus spoke the word.

ILLUSTRATION – When our daughter Allison was just a baby Nan had taken her to the grocery store. Allison was sitting in the basket as Nan pushed the basket out to the car in the parking lot. In the split second that Nan turned to unlock the car door Allison tried to stand up in the basket seat. As Nan turned around Allison was tumbling head first out of the basket onto the pavement. Nan quickly grabbed her up and checked her over, expecting to see a pool of blood where Allison's head hit the pavement, but she seemed to be just fine. Like any new mom Nan was so shaken by this that she drove to the church where I was in my study. I could hear Nan's frantic footsteps coming down the hall to my study. I opened the door and Nan burst into tears telling me the story of what had just happened and the amazement that Allison was apparently okay. In fact, she said that when Allison's head hit the pavement it seemed like her head landed on a cushion ... strange! As she told me what happened I realized that at the very time all this was happening in the grocery store parking lot I was on my knees in prayer in my study, praying for my family as I did every morning, including for their protection. That's not a tribute to my praying or my power; it's a tribute to the grace and the power

of Jesus unleashed when His people pray. My praying *here* can have a very real impact *there* because Jesus works everywhere.

John 4:53 - Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and all his household believed.

Apparently the royal official arrives home eager to see his son fully recovered. I’m thinking about what that must have been like when he walked through the door of his house, met by his wife standing there with their son who has unexplainably been restored to health. Remember the mom doesn’t know what happened in Cana between the dad and Jesus. When the husband walked in the door his wife may have said, “Honey, you won’t believe it. After you left to go to see Jesus the boy got worse and worse; I thought he would die at any minute. I didn’t know what to do to help him. Then suddenly he began to rally. Before long he was sitting up in the bed. The next thing I knew he was walking around and playing like nothing had ever happened. It was the most amazing thing I had ever seen.”

Can you just imagine the dad listening with a smile on his face? When his wife is finished telling her side of the story, he tells his wife, “Sweetheart, I found Jesus, told him about our son and asked Him to come with me so that He could help the boy, but Jesus did the strangest thing. He told me to go on back home, that everything would be okay ... the boy would live.” I imagine the dad, with his face beaming, saying, “I tell you, sweetheart, at that moment I knew what Jesus said was true. There was something in the words of Jesus that rang with truth. There was something in the face of Jesus that radiated power. So I just took Jesus at His Word. Honey, the boy got better at the seventh hour, didn’t he? That was the very moment Jesus told me to go home and that our son would live.” And as that family and their household servants embraced and rejoiced this royal official said to them all, “I’m putting my trust in Jesus. I surrender my life to Him.” And the Bible says that his whole household put their trust in Jesus as well.

And this is what Jesus is after. He wants not just admirers but followers who will trust Him with their lives and with their eternal destiny. He wants not just people who are amused by His power to perform miracles, but people who will commit their lives to Him in complete abandon.

Here again, a human need becomes a platform for God’s power to be displayed. And as a result people put their faith and trust in Jesus.

John 4:54 - This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee.

CONCLUSION

This is a miraculous sign pointing us to the truth about Jesus. Here’s what you need to know about Jesus:

- **Jesus’s word is sure.** This father had one “word” from Jesus ... “Go. Your son lives.” You and I have a whole Bible full of promises from God that are just as sure. Take Jesus at His Word.

- **Jesus's power is great.** His power can do what you can't do for yourself. Jesus spoke a word to a despairing father in Cana and immediately the son was healed twenty miles away in Capernaum. Listen, the God who spoke the world into existence from nothing can do amazing things with just a word. So take Jesus at His Word.
- **Jesus is the Lord of life.** Three times in our text we see the words "your son lives." After Jesus was crucified He rose from the grave. He is the Lord of life who gives life. Take Him at His Word.
- **Jesus's timing is perfect.** Just take Him at His Word. The official had to stand on the word of Jesus for about a day before he saw the evidence. We may have to stand on it for longer ... a week, a month, a year, several years. The important thing is to trust His timing. His word is on the line. He'll come through in time.
- **Jesus is good.** The father was forced to believe that Jesus is good and that He would take care of His boy. As much as that father loved his son, Jesus loved him all the more. Whatever Jesus tells you do to, take Him at His Word. He loves you.