

Series: Signs	Reference: John 4:46-54	Title: The Second	Date: 03.05.23
Website Writeup: The focus of this story, as with others in John, is on 'believing'. This story illustrates the new dimension of believing without the immediacy of seeing.			

Color Changes in text indicate slide changes

(Video Clip [The Life of Jesus #10](#))

Loving parents will do anything to get their child well. When two of John Crowley's young children were diagnosed with a rare disease considered a death sentence Crowley gave up his entire life to pursue a cure for his children.

Crowley quit his job, met with legions of scientists, teamed up with one. Then borrowed \$100,000 on his home and retirement to start a biotech company, and raised \$27 million in venture capital when the company developed a promising enzyme. When he needed a big company to get a drug into production, he sold his company to Genzyme Corp., of Cambridge, Mass., for \$137.5 million.

The story ends with Crowley getting the needed medication to his children. His new mission is to find a medication that works even better, as well as help other families find medications to treat rare diseases.¹

We have seen the video depiction of this passage, turn with me now to John 4:46-54, p726 of your pew Bibles and let's read it together...*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. 47When 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.*

48"Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe. 49The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." 50"Go," Jesus replied, "your son will live."

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. 51While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. 52When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him."

53Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and his whole household believed. 54This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

¹ Geeta Anand, "For His Sick Kids, a Father Struggled to Develop a Cure," *Wall Street Journal*, August 26, 2003, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB106184568337857300>; see also Jessica Mulvihill Moran, "A Father's Mission: How One Man Developed a Drug to Save the Lives of His Children," *Fox News*, August 28, 2016, <https://www.foxnews.com/health/a-fathers-mission-how-one-man-developed-a-drug-to-save-the-lives-of-his-children>

The purpose of John's Gospel can be found in chapter 20, vv30-31...³⁰*Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* In other words, these stories are time-tested trustworthy accounts with great evidence in support of them!

The focus of this story, as with others in John, is on 'believing', but the dimension of believing without the immediacy of seeing. Realizing belief may not come at first from your own direct encounter. It may come rather, through the tradition of family, or those with influence over you, since it says...*he and his whole household believed*. But this is not something the western worldview accepts easily, we're rational individuals demanding constant empirical truth. Although those same people may go to the zodiac or fortune tellers for guidance, or believe other stories which are spiritual and unprovable in nature. We simply believe what we choose to believe!

It's almost expected a child will reject their parents faith these days. And certain people of influence in our culture are dead-set on facilitating that process in a young persons life. Parents wring their hands & get frustrated, since their wisdom and life experience is outright rejected by those they love. They fight the constant onslaught of falsehood for themselves, their children & grandchildren. They may get louder and more adamant about issues since their voices have been robbed of authority, as kids are led astray by outside voices which don't actually love or care for them.

Faith-filled parents should be trusted & listened to above all other voices with evidence of positive change in their lives as a result of Jesus.

In John's mind, and also in Jesus', you don't have to see miracles or wonders to have faith. You can simply believe on conviction of scriptural Truth, or the testimony of someone who loves us and exhibits the longstanding transformation of Christ in their lives - we can simply choose to believe the stories. We have been too focused on experiential ministry, rather than on scriptural conviction, and the life change which comes as a result of it. Our train is not driven by feeling, rather fact, then faith, then feeling bringing up the rear.

We look to the short term, when we should be looking at the long. Longterm lives built on biblical values and principles should speak loudly to us. We can trust the stories, and convictions of others. Doubt, scrutiny, suspicion & skepticism are simply not positive values or helpful character traits in the face of longstanding time-tested stories & the witness of those who love us & have exhibited the benefits of walking with Jesus for years. The failing stories of leaders & parents over the years are minuscule to the amount of people who've believed & walked well with Jesus - they can be trusted. But trust is a limited commodity these days...

Maybe you have a parent in their 60's, 70's or 80's, and they seem angry & frustrated as their values are being assaulted & dismantled. We listen to others and label them just

outdated conservatives as they hold onto what we view as dying traditional values - that is not loving & respectful at all. And this is not about politics or sociology, this is about His-Story, God's Truth & loving pursuit of His people throughout history - can we believe it, or not?

Older Christians & faith-filled parents only want for us what they already know to be true without us having to go through the same mistakes they did. That it's best to walk with Jesus making Matthew 6:33 our life's verse...*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

With Jesus central to all of life, things fall into place much easier. We're able to navigate the emotion life dredges up more easily, and walk through them more effectively. Relationships will be stronger & healthier. Stability & success as defined by Scripture will come.

In many a parents experience who've walked with Jesus doubt has been erased over years as to the veracity of the biblical message - it's as true to them as the sun rising each day, the most practical & best way to live life in relationship with others. The changed life over decades is the greater miracle than even an on the spot healing!

The Bible & life are HIS-Story | History. The record of His loving pursuit of us, filled with practical guidance & wisdom along the way. **Knowing that, we should connect with our Creator daily, setting every thought & decision before Him (II Cor. 10:5), obeying & pursuing Him well with the knowledge that we're covered by His blood, nothing can take that relationship & reality away from us.**

Older Christians & parents simply say with all the wisdom of their years collectively, **do not bow to culture, bow to Christ, always, and you'll do well.** In other words, as Jesus said to Paul in Acts 26:14...*'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'*

Do you know what a goad is? A goad was a long sharp stick used to get an ox going the way you wanted when plowing. You'd jab the hind legs of the ox with the goad until he cooperated.

Essentially, what this is saying is Saul, or Paul as he's later known, was the ox already under the direction of Jesus as the farmer. But Paul was kicking against His direction, and it's certainly easier not to do so; to simply believe & submit. Paul was a well educated man of Jewish faith & background, but his skepticism about Christ was holding him back from his true purpose. Many of us do the same, we kick against the goads, unwilling to be led in the pride of our faulty intellect leading to unreasonable doubt when Christ & others have shown us the way already!

The healing of the official's son reveals this man, a non-Jew, could believe without being shown. He simply turns around & returns home trusting Jesus' words - he knew, Jesus had heard him. It also reveals, God is generous with His grace. Pouring it out on Gentile

& Jew alike. He answers need. **Do you believe God has heard you? Or do you need signs & wonders to believe?**

Once again, Jesus is in Galilee after lamenting the lack of faith among His people when in John 4:44 He noted a prophet has no honor in his own country. In other words, familiarity breeds contempt. When there's familiarity we tend to choose not to believe someone. They may have said, "I saw Him grow up, why would I believe He's the messiah!?" Or for us, "I've been to church, didn't do a thing for me!" Or, "My parents drive me crazy, why would I adopt their beliefs?" Despite all the signs to the reality of it - maybe it's our unbelief which stands in the way?

With other older Christians around us, we think of all the things we've seen from them which doesn't seem to fit what they say they believe, and we tend to judge God's Word on a persons mistakes. We forget, everyone's in process, that the Christian is the farthest from being a hypocrite given we admit we battle our own sinful nature. There may be plenty to point to in a persons life which testifies about Jesus, but we focus in on the few things which aren't of Him & draw faulty conclusions of Christ as a result. **We can't judge God on the disobedience of His people. This is unfair to God - it's much better to be mature, look at the good, and go to the Scriptures ourselves leaving our skepticism at the door to allow Jesus to speak. Do as I say, and not as I do, is not necessarily hypocrisy or bad advice! Sometimes it's just a humble statement acknowledging our limitations.**

So here they are...suddenly we find Jesus confronted with someone who's traveled a great distance because of his faith in Jesus. An official in Capernaum learns of Jesus & goes to Him to ask Jesus to heal his son. There are two levels of distance between this man & Jesus. The first is geographical: Jesus is in Cana, and the official is in Capernaum. The distance between Capernaum & Cana is a full day's travel on foot, and yet this man has made the journey to request Jesus's presence to heal his son.²

The second point of distance is social: the official was most likely of the aristocratic class. As a member of Herod Antipas's court, he was highly influenced by the Greco-Roman culture of the time. So, in every way, he's the opposite of Jesus.³

Nevertheless, the official seeks Jesus out & lets Jesus know that his son is ill (v. 47). This is a journey of faith, to leave your son who is at the point of death & go a day's journey away in the hope that you'll find the one person you think can heal him. Like John Crowley going far to help his children, this man went far as well.

Jesus responds in a somewhat perplexing way in v48...*"Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."* Jesus is most likely addressing the people who fit into the category of verse 44 - those who just choose not to believe due to their familiarity. Whatever the case, the official makes the journey, hears what Jesus says, and yet remains steadfast in his faith.

² Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014], 261

³ Keener, *New Testament*, 261

It's a demonstration of the official's perseverance when he responds, "*Sir, come down before my child dies,*" to which Jesus replies, "*Go; your son will live*" (vv. 49-50). Hearing that was all he needed; he turned around to make the one-day journey back home (v. 50). At this point, he makes his second journey of faith. Twice he asked for Jesus to come to his son to heal him. The second time, Jesus merely says, "*Go, your child lives.*" To turn around & leave without visible proof of healing & yet believe is a tremendous act of faith.

Consider your prayer life in light of this official's actions. How often do we pray, but when we're done, the silence remains & problems remain. Do you believe God's heard you? Or do you need signs & wonders to believe? The actions of this official, an outsider by the standards of Jesus's disciples, should challenge us to take stock of our faith & how our actions line up with what we claim to believe.

On his way home, the official encounters his servants, who let him know his son's recovered. He discovers the time the son turned the corner was the same time when Jesus told him to return home (vv. 52-53). This leads to even more people believing, and we read it's another sign of Jesus (v. 54).

As we saw last week, these are signs of God working through Jesus in this world for our salvation. And so, too, here we see that when God works through Jesus, it's good news. Literally. This story's a picture of the gospel. What did this man do to deserve the favor of Jesus? He believed. That's all. He didn't do any good works. He simply believed, and Jesus responded with grace. The sign once again shows us, God is gracious & generous with His grace. And we remember, in John 20:29 Jesus said... "*Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*" That's us...

In last week's story and this one, there's a statement of need, a longing for help from Jesus, followed by a censure from Jesus & then the providing of a miraculous answer. Jesus was surrounded by unbelief. Those demanding a sign or wonder, but those things are less important as to whether Jesus was who He claimed to be. Does the Scripture reveal Him, does He fulfill it? Did God come in the flesh to reveal Himself in Jesus? Is this whole story, the Bible, true & can I believe it?

There are parallels in the stories of the wedding & this man. The servants filled & drew the water, or wine for the guests (2:7-8). The official heard the word & responded appropriately (4:50). The man obeyed the word of Jesus without seeing the sign as did the servants. In the ancient world miracles & acts of power were linked to the presence of the miracle worker, but in this story the healer refuses to be present. The story's an important illustration of the purpose for which John wrote the Gospel; believing the Word is linked with not immediately seeing the sign.⁴

⁴ Gerald L. Borchert, [John 1-11](#), vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 220-221.

We know, in these two stories the disciples believed at the wedding. Jesus' own mother as well. But largely, Gentile faith seemed to surpass the faith of Israel at this time. **In Mt 8:10-12 He marveled at the faith of a Gentile Roman Centurion. It says...¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ¹¹I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹²But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."**

This tells us faith, without having to call on great wonders, but just raw belief or trust, pleases God. And also, there's a consequence to our skepticism & constant disbelief. Maybe all those old Christians seemingly frustrated because you've thrown out all they know are frustrated because they love you, and don't want to see you suffer the consequences of constant skepticism & unbelief while they can testify so clearly, this Jesus stuff is true!

I'm 56 years old. I have 4 biological children, many more foster kids, a grey beard, and a lot of life experience. I've been a missionary for 8.5 years in a muslim country. I've pastored at one of the largest churches in the area, and planted this one 15 years ago. I've led & had opportunity to see how the Gospel works when it's accepted & applied, and how lives fall apart when it's rejected. I've scoured the Scriptures over my life, along with other religious & philosophical writings. I've read extensively on the historicity of the Gospel accounts. I see nothing but proof of their historicity, and confirmation of their veracity. My education has come about through choosing to believe, and living it out even when my flesh wanted to doubt. I've adopted the attitude that if I come across something in the Bible I disagree with, then I'm wrong & must adjust to it. Gospel Truth is time tested in me. I believe it, although I can't answer every question about it. I'm your pastor, imperfect in many ways, hopefully transparent about those things. I love you.

Trust me when I say, this story of God, the biblical accounts, and all they teach are real, true & trustworthy. Jesus loves you. He came to show that, to bring reconciliation, redemption & abundant life to you! Like this man, take Jesus at His word, stop kicking against the goads!

If you can testify, and are convinced of the same, stand up! Do any of you standing have people in your life you long to know Jesus? Be lovingly bold & patient with them. Pray for them & tell them the story again. Think on those people now, and let's take the time to silently pray for each one of them. After which I will end with prayer, and we can wrap up restating what we believe by reciting the Apostles Creed & celebrating the very real story of Christ again at the Lord's Table... (Pray silently).

**Would you stand & read aloud with me the Apostles Creed?
I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,**

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended to the dead.

On the third day He arose again;
He ascended into heaven,
He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
And He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Let's stay in this posture of prayer for a moment. Hold your hands out as if you were receiving grace from the Lord right now, being filled again with faith & the Holy Spirit... *The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

Examine your hearts now, is their unbelief or sin you need to repent of before coming to the Table? If so, do that now, and then, when you are ready, come up and take the elements anytime from now until the end of the service.