

JOH 4:43-54 "After the two days he left for Galilee. 44 (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) 45 When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there. 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. 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. 48 "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." 49 The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." 50 Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed. 51 While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. 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." 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. 54 This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee."

Again, as we keep the context in mind here, Jesus has spent two days in Samaria at the request of the Samaritan people of the town of Sychar. They had come to put their trust in Christ as the "Savior of the world." They had heard the word of the Lord and came to believe that Jesus was in fact the promised Messiah, and so many of them received Him with gladness and joy.

But, now it was time to get on with our Lord's original intent which was to go back to Galilee. But before we go there we have in verse 44 a short parenthesis which sets up what is about to take place in Galilee.

JOH 4:44 "(Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.)"

John is simply recognizing what everyone in Israel knew to be true of Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry as Mark makes clear as he quotes the very words of Jesus.

MAR 6:1-4 "Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 2 When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! 3 Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4 ***Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor."***

This is amazing to me that Jesus could teach the truth of God's word with power, and even demonstrate miracles in the power of God, and yet people can be offended at this. And so, it's no wonder that our Lord can say that a prophet has no honor in his hometown.

One of the reasons is that prior to Jesus demonstrating that he is a prophet, or messenger sent from God, he appeared as a regular person like everyone else. But once He began to act or speak with power and authority as from God, among His own people, they should have not become jealous and envious of Him, as if to say, "who died and put you in charge?" Or, "how can you speak to us in such an authoritative way?; you're no better than us."

The nation of Israel in Christ's day was not willing, by and large, to accept Jesus as the Messiah, primarily because of their familiarity with Jesus who, up to his public ministry, was not considered to be anyone extraordinary. He was a carpenter. He belonged to a family like every other family. Why should He assume a special place in their community?

And unlike what the Jews thought a Messiah should look like; a powerful political and military leader who would vanquish the foes of Israel, Jesus was a man who had none of those ambitions.

And this attitude played out in many ways throughout the earthly ministry of our Lord as it will in our text this morning where Jesus will not be honored among His people, despite the fact that He was honored by the Samaritans who were the enemies of the Jews. That's the point our Lord is making as John records these words for us.

JOH 4:45 "When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there."

Now at first glance it would seem that everything I just said about our Lord's declaration that a prophet has no honor in His own country has just been blown out of the water. After all, when He arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed Him. By this action are they not honoring Him?

And the answer is no. They are not honoring Him as Messiah. They are not honoring Him as the Savior of the world as did the Samaritans. They are recognizing that they might be able to gain something for themselves by attaching themselves to Him.

Notice the reason for them welcoming Jesus. "They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there."

What had they seen in Jerusalem during the Passover feast?

JOH 2:23-24 "Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. 24 ***But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men.***"

Keep in mind that these miracles of Jesus took place right after He had cleared the temple of the merchants and money changers. And so, He raised quite a stir there in Jerusalem and many people were certainly curious of this man, and even more so after He did these miraculous signs.

It's interesting that these same people didn't seem to be willing to follow Jesus out of Jerusalem when He went into Samaria. Where was their allegiance if He was so popular with the crowds? It ended with the last miracle in Jerusalem. If they had truly thought He was the Messiah they would have followed Him no matter where He went, as did our Lord's disciples who were told by Jesus, "come follow Me."

But, now the Passover feast is over and Jews all around Israel are going back to their hometowns after their pilgrimage to the capital city with its temple. And so, by the time Jesus leaves Samaria many of those Jews who saw Him in Jerusalem are back in Galilee and they remember the miracles He had done. And so, they welcome Him for that reason.

And here is where the apostle John is going with this section as he points out the attitude of the people regarding Jesus.

JOH 4:46-48 "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. 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. 48 "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

So, here's the scene. Jesus is back in Cana where He turned water into wine. Many of the people who lived there remember that festive occasion, and for the few who didn't have too much to drink they remember that it was Jesus who was responsible for doing that miracle.

Coupled with the fact that Jesus was also doing miracles in Jerusalem everyone in Cana now knew that Jesus was empowered in a special way by God. Knowing this, one of the royal officials of that region comes to Jesus and asks that He would heal his son who is sick unto death.

JOH 4:46-47 "..... And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. 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."

Capernaum is about 20 to 25 miles east, northeast of Cana on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee. It may have been known that Jesus was going to be in the area since it was about a two to three day walk from Sychar to Cana, and there were those who would have alerted people in the surrounding areas of Cana of His presence, including Capernaum.

We don't know how long this royal official's son had been sick but as soon as he hears that Jesus is in Cana he goes to meet Him, which would have been a four or five hour ride by horse.

You can imagine the concern this man had for his son, as well as the relief that a miracle worker was essentially in his backyard. And yet, when he arrives in Cana and approaches Jesus he seems to get a very odd response from our Lord which could suggest that He was being very insensitive to this man's plight.

JOH 4:48 "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

Again, at first glance it appears that our Lord takes offense at this man's request, but this simply isn't the case. What our Lord is

doing is responding to the attitude of the people in general which was seen in His earlier declaration that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

Jesus was making the point that, unlike the Samaritans who were willing to take Him at His word, as they believed on Him as the Savior of the world, the Jews were not. Instead they wanted more proof through miracles, and would only believe if they saw some sort of miracle.

And so, Jesus is essentially laying out before these people in Cana, and by extension all of Israel, the condition of their hearts. And by the way, there's no guarantee that even if Jesus performs miracles among them, that any will believe. The Jews have already got a track record in this regard even from the beginnings of them coming out of Egypt.

NUM 14:11 "The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?"

In fact, right up to the end of our Lord's life people who had witnessed all sorts of miracles still didn't believe and yet they asked for another miracle and promised that if He performed this last one that they would believe. I point you to the cross where Jesus hung.

MAT 27:42 "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him *come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.*"

Not a chance. And I don't mean to pick on the Jews here, as though they somehow have a corner on the market when it comes to unbelief, even in the face of miracles. There isn't a human being on the planet who is going to believe simply because of a miracle.

This is the whole point. It is not written, 'faith comes by miracles, and miracles by the hand of God.' It is "faith comes by *hearing* and *hearing by the word of God.*" This was the very problem Jesus pointed out when He conveyed the story of Lazarus and the rich man, where both died and Lazarus went to Abraham's side in heaven, while the rich man went to hell.

The rich man called out to Abraham to send Lazarus back to his father's house to warn them of the same fate he encountered in unbelief. Here's Abraham's response.

LUK 16:29-31 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 30 "No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' 31 "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

A miracle, in and of itself, does not change the heart of a person. Only God can change the heart as they believe on the truth of who Christ is and why He came as recorded in the word of God. That doesn't mean God can't use a miracle to draw someone's heart. But as Jesus says, one must ultimately believe what they have heard, not necessarily what they have seen in the way of a miracle.

Having said that, it is most certainly a miracle used by God that does in fact change the heart of a person and that is the miracle of regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:5-6 ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

This is the same miracle of the heart that the prophet Ezekiel addresses.

Ezekiel 11:19-20 ¹⁹ "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

One miracle of God gives a new heart to His people that results in the opening of their eyes to see the truth as they embrace the Messiah by faith. The other miracle is simply witnessed through the eyes of unbelief as people continue to reject the Messiah, as Luke bears witness to in his gospel, despite the miracle they see with blinded eyes.

And so, when Jesus says, "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe," He means to say that they are not looking to Him in faith, only that they want the blessing and benefit of the miracle itself. In this case it would be a miracle to heal this royal official's son.

Now, that doesn't mean that this royal official was acting in an ungodly way by seeking Jesus to heal his son. In fact, this does

show us a sense of this man's faith. He wasn't going to the Pharisees for his son's healing. He wasn't going to the priests for the healing. He was going to the carpenter/prophet he believed could heal his son.

In other words, this royal official, unlike many of the Jews, didn't care about miracles as a sign to prove that Jesus was sent from God. He wasn't some skeptical by-stander who was looking for a good show. He had a real need. The miracle was not for himself directly, but for his son, whom he loved.

And this is why he persists, even after Jesus' rebuke of the people. He isn't going to be swayed because his love for his son is greater than his pride. His trust in Jesus' ability and power is greater than his curiosity just to see a miracle.

JOH 4:49 "The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

By the way, it should be noted here that this royal official is in all likelihood not a Jew. This term royal official or nobleman is one designated for rulers in a king's court. The rulers of the Jews would be designated as those of the Sanhedrin. This man was probably of Herod's court. And so, you've probably got a Gentile coming to Jesus, a Jew, to heal his son.

This particular ruler is not unlike another Gentile who came to Jesus to heal his servant. This was the Centurion we read about in Matthew.

MAT 8:6-9 "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." 7 Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." 8 The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

The similarity between these two examples is that both are Gentiles and that both come to Jesus to solve their problems which has to do with needing a healing. The similarity, however, stops there. In the case of the royal official he asks Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son, believing that only if Jesus can lay a hand on him will he be healed.

The case of the Centurion is that this soldier understood that Jesus can heal whether He is at his servant's side or not. He understands

how power and authority works which is why he says to Jesus, "just say the word, and my servant will be healed."

And of course Jesus can't help but respond to this and teach those Jews who were there as Matthew records this encounter.

MAT 8:10 "When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."

This is astonishing. The Gentiles who seek Jesus believe Him to be the Messiah sent from God. The Jews haven't made up their minds yet. They need another miracle to weigh in on their decision.

In the case of the Centurion Jesus actually volunteers to go the soldier's house to heal his servant. The Centurion declines and trusts that a word from Christ will be enough. The royal official begs Jesus to come to Capernaum and Jesus declines, instead giving him the word which was sufficient.

JOH 4:50 "Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed."

Like the Centurion, our Lord's word turns out to be more than sufficient. Jesus gave this man the hope that his son would live and we see no indication that he continued to fret that unless Jesus went to Capernaum his son would die.

That's faith. That's trust in the word and power of the One who said, "You may go. Your son will live."

In fact, there is every indication that this royal official was completely satisfied that his son would live, according to our text.

JOH 4:50-53 "... ***The man took Jesus at his word and departed.***
51 While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. 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." 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."

What is interesting here is what is recorded in verse 52 which gives us a sense of the time frame of what happened. We're told that the royal official was met by his servants while he is still traveling home, which suggests that the servants were so excited about the boy's recovery that they were on their way to Cana to tell their master.

The other thing we notice is that they meet him the next day which suggests that the father was in no hurry to get home. Why? Because he trusted Jesus at His word and immediately he rests in that word and takes comfort in that word from the Lord. There is no reason to be anxious when God says, your son will live.

In fact, we're told that the father asked at what time did the fever leave his son, and the servants say, it was at the seventh hour. The seventh hour is 1 PM. If the father was still fretting he could have easily have made it home by about 5 PM to check in on his son. Instead, he takes his time, maybe spending the night there in Cana.

This is an amazing amount of faith this man has. And simply because he questions his servants about the time in which his son was healed does not mean he was lacking in faith at that point, only that he was curious as to when Jesus actually healed his son after He said He would.

After all, Jesus could have healed the royal official's son only moments before he got back to Capernaum and Jesus would still have been faithful to His word. I think this official had a smile on his face when he asked that question as if to verify that Jesus was quick about His promise to heal the boy.

And when the answer came back, the seventh hour, the official must have beamed with excitement as he recounted the assurance Jesus gave him at that very moment.

In fact, we know he did because he then went on to share all of this with his household and we're told they too believed. In this case it was a miracle which was used in the lives of these people to bring them to the Savior, but ultimately it was their faith in the Savior, not in the miracle, which caused them to have hope.

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

By this John means this was the second miraculous sign of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee since we know He performed many signs in Jerusalem between this miracle in Galilee and the turning of the water into wine which was also in Galilee.

But what do we learn from all of this? A number of things. We learn that not everyone comes to Christ in the same way and in the same fashion. This whole section of Scripture includes Nicodemus inquiring of Jesus and yet we're not told he made a decision for the

Lord after that encounter when Jesus explained to him that one must be born again to come into the Kingdom of God.

The second example was of a belligerent Samaritan woman whose heart was bent against the Jews and was not actively seeking the Messiah. And yet this Jewish Messiah sought her out and softened her heart as He demonstrated that He was not only a prophet, but the very Savior of the world.

And now, this official ruler desperately seeks the only one he is aware of who can meet a physical need and finds that his spiritual need will also be met by this compassionate Messiah.

Jesus meets us where we are and He calls us to Himself. But if we think that only a miracle, or a command performance from some great Christian musical artist, or Billy Graham himself, will be the thing we need to change the heart of a person then we've missed the point of the only person who can actually do that.

It doesn't mean God can't or won't use miracles or famous people to draw crowds and give them the gospel. But if those things are not available to us we certainly don't want to lose heart thinking that God needs any of those things to bring people to Himself.

Because even if God chooses not to use a miracle in the life of a loved one, or people in this city, or if He chooses not to bring famous Christians to our church to be used to reach this town, we still have the one thing which we're told will never return void to God, and that's His word and His gospel.

We always need to be willing to use His word and trust that God will take that word and touch the heart of a person to embrace the only one who can save people from their sin.

But there's something else we can learn and that is that miracles are okay to seek after from God as long as we're not trying to prove God through them. We see that God is merciful and loving and compassionate and desires to meet the needs of His people.

We need to go to the Lord often for all of our needs. And however the Lord decides to meet those needs we need to be content that He is a loving God who knows best how to deal with our particular circumstances.

But ultimately, like these people we've studied over the last few weeks, we need to simply trust that Jesus is who He says He is. He is God. He is Savior. He is one who knows our deepest needs and

He desires that we come to Him often, as the writer of Hebrews reminds us.

HEB 4:15-16 "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are -yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Our greatest need is salvation, but all of us have needs that God is more than willing and able to solve. But we need to trust that He will solve it according to His will and timetable, not ours. And that's where our faith comes in.

May the Lord work in all of our lives as He did in the lives of these people like Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman and the royal official who all had needs. But may we trust that He is God and there is none like Him.

Give Him glory in all things, in the good times and in the bad, knowing that He works all things out for our good, to those who love Him, to those who have been called according to His purpose. And He does have a purpose for your life and mine.

And a great part of that purpose is simply to trust Him and do those works which will bring honor to His name. God knows what He's doing and He has known us and chosen us in Christ before the foundations of the world. I like the way Paul puts it to the Ephesians.

EPH 1:11-14 "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of his glory."