

Go, Your Son Lives
John 4:43-54
September 19, 2021

Back in 1988 a magnitude 7.2 earthquake hit the land of Armenia. It killed at least 25,000 lives. As soon as the deadly tremor stopped, a father rushed to an elementary school to look for his son. When he got there, he saw the school building had already collapsed.

Looking at the gigantic mass of stones and rubble, he remembers a promise he had made to his son. He said, “No matter happens, I will always be there for you.” Remembering this promise, he found the area closest to his son’s class and began to pull back the concrete slabs and stones. Other parents came and began to sob for their children. “It’s too late” they said, “Even a police officer encouraged him to stop digging. He said, “It’s too late. There is nothing you can do to help.”

But this father did not give up. He dug and dug and dug. He dug for 16 hours and then 26 hours ... then 36 hours. He kept on digging. He had a brief rest here and there but most of that time he had been digging. His hands were raw as you can imagine. After 36 hours of digging, he had no energy left, but still he refused to quit. He was desperate to save his son. Can you imagine his heart? Can you imagine what he must have felt as he was digging into the night and into the day break? Hopelessness? Helplessness? I am sure that is what he felt but more than anything he must have felt desperation.¹

There was a man who had a similar hopelessness, helplessness and desperation in Capernaum, a small town in the region of Galilee. His son was gravely ill. We don’t know much about the son’s illness: what he was suffering from or how long he had been sick. The only thing we know is that he had a high fever and there was no one who could save him.

The Bible says the father was a high ranking official. The Bible describes him as a *Basilikos*, meaning Royal Official. He was a king’s man. He probably had power and wealth that most people in Capernaum envied. When his son got very sick, I am sure he called the best doctor not just in Capernaum but in the whole region of Galilee and perhaps beyond. With his position, I am sure he was able to get the brightest and best. I am sure he did everything he could to save his son but at the end of his effort, he heard these disappointing words from the doctor, “There is nothing that can be done to save your son.”

¹ Max Lucado, *When Christ Comes*, (Word Publishing: Nashville), 1991, p. 21-22.

Before we look at this story, it is important to know the context in which this story is introduced. Let me begin with the first chapter. In the first chapter of this Gospel, the author said that “The True light, the creator himself, came into the world but the world did not receive him. He came to his own people but his own people did not receive him.”² “His own people” refers to the Jews, and religious leaders of the day.

To the religious leaders, the Jerusalem Temple and the religious rules and regulations were there to serve them more than to serve God. There was a lot of corruption in the Temple and in Judaism.

When people brought a sacrificial offering to the temple, for example, the offering examiner would check the animal for any kind of blemish. If he couldn't find any blemish, he often caused one, and the offering would not be acceptable for sacrifice. The worshipper, then, had to buy an animal for the sacrifice in the Temple court at a much higher price than on the outside. Whatever profit the merchants made was divided between the merchants and the religious leaders.

The money changers did the same. Only Jewish coins were acceptable in the Temple. And in most places, Roman currency was the common currency. Obviously, the people who traveled a long distance to come to the Temple usually carried the Roman currency. But that money was not acceptable in the Temple. So, the money changers were available in the Temple. These money exchangers charged a lot more than the money exchangers outside of the Temple. Again, the profit was shared between the money changers and the religious leaders. This sort of exploitation was rampant.

In the second chapter, the author tells us about a wedding in Cana. It is the story of Jesus changing water into wine. The water was there for a religious rite, a purification ritual. People had to wash their hands and feet before they could enter into the ceremonial place. In other words, the water represented Judaism. When Jesus changed water into wine, it literally proclaimed that “the day of religious rules and regulations is over and the day of grace and the new beginnings has come.”

Right after that story we see Jesus cleansing the Temple. He drove out the merchants and the money changers. He said, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!” This upset the religious leaders. They came to him and said, “Since you are doing this, what kind of sign can you give us?”

² John 1:9-11.

What kind of proof do you have that you have this authority?”³ They wanted to see the signs. They basically wanted to see if Jesus could perform miracles.

Then at the end of chapter 2, we are told that Jesus did exactly that. He performed miracles, signs and wonders, and the Bible says, “People believed in his name only because they saw the signs.”

Then in the third chapter, Jesus meets a prestigious religious leader, named Nicodemus. The conversation between them was about the transformation of heart and life. Jesus pointed out that it was not the rules and regulations that made a person spiritual. Instead, it is the obedience from the heart.

Jesus focused on the change, the conversion from within. Not only in this private conversation, but throughout his entire ministry, Jesus emphasized the change of heart and mind, the change of attitude and perception as something much more important than having the right rituals. The purpose of rituals was to bring people close to God.

Then in the fourth chapter, Jesus did something totally unacceptable in the eyes of the Jews. He went through Samaria. He walked on their soil. He talked with a woman in public. Not just any woman but a Samaritan woman, a Samaritan woman with a bad reputation. That is not all. He also had fellowship with the Samaritans and stayed with them in one of their homes for two days. This was unthinkable for any devout Jew, let alone a religious leader or a Rabbi. A devout Jew would have refused to walk through Samaria, or would have avoided talking with a woman in a public place, and would have declined to stay in a Samaritan’s home.

There in Samaria, however, something very different happened. People believed in Jesus because of what he said, not because he performed miracles. Unlike the Jews, they simply believed his words. In fact, Jesus did not perform any miracle in Samaria while he was there. He simply taught them and they believed that he was the Messiah.

The Jews wanted signs and wonder, and they saw plenty of them. Even so, not everyone believed him but Samaritans believed without seeing any miracle.

Then Jesus went to Galilee from Samaria. The people of Galilee welcomed him because they saw signs and wonders, the very miracles Jesus performed in Jerusalem. Many of them were in Jerusalem and saw the miracles Jesus performed there. The

³ John 2:18.

only reason why they welcomed Jesus is because they saw the signs and wonders he performed.

Then Jesus went to Cana. There he met a royal official, a high ranking person, who came from Capernaum. From Capernaum, he had to walk 22 miles uphill to get to Cana. As soon as he met Jesus, he asked for a miracle, a sign, a wonder. He said to Jesus, "Please come with me and save my son. He is dying." Do you know what Jesus said to him? Jesus said, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." "Your kind, the people with authority and power, will not believe unless you see signs and wonders. That is all you are interested in." Basically, that is what Jesus said. Doesn't that sound harsh? But there is something interesting here.

When Jesus said, "Unless you see signs and wonders..." the word "you" is in plural not singular. He wasn't just talking to the royal official. He was talking to everybody.

Then a miracle happens, right there in that place. Remember the father who was digging the rubbles to save his son, how desperate he was? This father, who came from Capernaum, was as desperate as the father in Armenia who was digging in the rubbles. So, even after hearing the harsh criticism from this country rabbi, he begs him again. "Sir, please come before my son dies." Then Jesus said, "Go, your son lives."

Then the Bible says, "The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way." Can you imagine? Did he see the miracle? No! Not yet! BUT HE BELIEVED! Don't you think that is a miracle? A man who is desperate to save his son, a man who would do anything to save his son, a man who comes 22 miles of constant uphill to bring this miracle worker home to save his son, simply believes Jesus' word and goes home without Jesus? Can you believe it? No pleading! No Begging! He goes home with nothing but a promise. That, my friends, is a miracle!

Samaritans believed Jesus without seeing any signs and wonders, and this father simply believed Jesus' word. Both of these are incredible miracles. What we see is simple faith. With this simple faith they received great blessings.

The Bible tells us that on his way home, this royal official met his servants coming to give him the good news. From them, he learned that at the precise moment when Jesus spoke that his son would live, his son's condition started to improve.

Do you know what I believe? I believe it was the exact moment when this father believed Jesus' word, that is when his son's healing took place. It wasn't when

Jesus spoke it, but when this father believed it, that was the moment when the healing took place.

You see, seeing miracles and wonders do not necessarily lead to faith but faith leads to seeing and experiencing. Seeing is not believing; Believing is seeing! And by seeing, the faith solidifies. “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”⁴

When the father realized what Jesus spoke was true, what he trusted and believed was true, his believing became an experiential conviction, a faith that cannot be shaken.

Do you know what happened to the father who was digging the rubbles in Armenia? After 38 hours of digging, he pulled back a big stone and heard his son’s voice. He called the son’s name, “Arman! Arman!” And a voice answered him, “Dad, it’s me!”

As this boy was being pulled out he said, “Dad, I told other kids not to worry. I told them if you are alive, you would come and save me. And when you save me, they would be saved too.”

This father, who kept his word, gave his son the greatest gift he could possibly give, the love that cannot be shaken, the trust that cannot be broken. To this boy Arman, no matter what happens in his life he would never doubt his father’s love for him. Because now, his father’s love has become this boy’s experiential conviction.

My friends, how many times have you heard that God loves you? How many times have you heard God cares for you? Has God’s love become an experiential conviction for you? You may not see incredible miracles in your life to solidify your faith but you will see small miracles here and there and often enough to convict you that God loves you and cares for you. So, my friends, let us trust the Lord.

⁴ Hebrews 11:1