

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 4TH - 5TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

## YOUR SON WILL LIVE (JOHN 4:43-54)

After the two-day delay in Samaria, Jesus resumed His trip to Galilee (vs. 43).

- Galilee was Jesus' home (He grew up in Nazareth), and because the people there were familiar with Him, they didn't honor Him the way they should've (vs. 44).
- Sometimes an assumed familiarity with Jesus is actually a false familiarity: we think we know Him well, but we don't, and that shows up in how we don't honor Him as we should.

The public response to Jesus from the residents of Galilee was good—they had seen everything He'd done in Jerusalem and approved (vs. 45).

- But Jesus knew that this response was insincere and shallow (John 2:23-25), and it wasn't honoring to Him at all.
- As Jesus returned to the town of Cana, word apparently traveled 20 miles to nearby Capernaum that Jesus had come.

A certain royal official (probably an officer of Herod Antipas) whose son was deathly ill traveled from Capernaum to Cana to plead with Jesus to heal his son (vs. 47).

- This man is desperate and is begging Jesus for help.
- Verse 48 seems like a very cold, uncompassionate response from Jesus, but we must consider the context of the passage.

The crowd surrounding Jesus in Galilee had welcomed Him simply because of the signs and wonders He performed in Jerusalem.

- Their faith wasn't built on trusting in and honoring Jesus as Lord; it was simply built on the novelty of the spectacular.
- Jesus addresses the crowd (not the man) when He says, "Unless YOU PEOPLE see signs and wonders, you will not believe" (vs. 48).

## THE MESSAGE OR THE MIRACLE?

The Samaritans in Sychar believed because they heard Jesus' message and received Him into their hearts with trusting, obedient faith.

- But the Jews in Galilee just wanted a sign, miracle, or magic trick before they'd believe.
- What reasons do we have for believing (or not believing) in Jesus? Do we seek signs? Or do we seek to understand and believe His Word?

Regardless of the crowd's motives for welcoming Jesus, this royal official is in crisis and Jesus is the only one He knows to turn to (vs. 49).

- Some of us come to Jesus in times of crisis, and Jesus doesn't turn us away.
- Jesus performs for this man and his family the most unmiraculous miracle: "Go...your son will live."
- The man believed Jesus' word and had confident faith in his heart as he traveled home (vs. 50).

This noble believed in Jesus' power before there was any evidence, but after he believed, the evidence showed up (vs. 51-53).

- At the very hour Jesus spoke the word, his son was completely healed.
- The noble's faith was strengthened, and he believed in Jesus as Lord, along with his entire household.

Some of us come to Jesus because of our own crises, and Jesus won't turn us away.

- Jesus doesn't just want us to trust Him because we're desperate and have no other choices because we've tried everything else first.
- Jesus wants us to believe in His Word and trust Him with every part of our lives.
- "Believing is seeing": if we believe before we see evidence, the evidence will be given.

## DO YOU WANT TO GET WELL? (JOHN 5:1-16)

As chapter 5 opens, John makes a geographical switch from Galilee to Jerusalem during the days of an undisclosed Jewish Festival (vs. 1).

- We're told of a pool in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate that was surrounded by five colonnades (vs. 2).
- At this pool, a great number of disabled people used to lie (vs. 3).
- What about verse 4?

The oldest manuscripts we have of John's gospel don't actually have verse 4 in them: verse 4 seems to be a scribal note of explanation that was incorporated into later copies of John.

- The Greeks had created a cult around Asklepios, the pagan god of healing.
- During the Hellenistic period, the Greeks built "Asklepians"—or ancient healing centers, all across the Greek Empire.

The ill and disabled would congregate at these regional healing centers, sleeping on mats with the hope of receiving healing from divine powers.

- The Greeks also attributed the healing powers of natural springs to spirits—maybe this is what people believed about the pool of Bethesda, and maybe this is what's being described in the scribal note of verse 4.

Amidst this crowd lying by the pool is a man who'd been disabled for thirty-eight years (vs. 5).

- This man had lived with thirty-eight years of hopelessness, disappointment, and missed opportunities.
- "Do you want to get well?" (vs. 6)
- The man's response reads like a very flimsy excuse: people kept getting in front of him, and he had no one to help him get in the water.

Often what stands between Jesus and us are our flimsy excuses.

- Our excuses, our issues, and our general sense of victimhood over time can become parts of our identity.
- This man was not just crippled by a disability in his legs; he was crippled by hopelessness and his own learned helplessness.
- This man might have been miserable, but at least he was familiar with his situation.

If the pool really had been God's healing agent, Jesus could have made angels stir up the water and

helped the man get in, but Jesus' words prove to us who the real healer is (vs. 8).

- Jesus tells this man to do what he cannot do, and miraculously this man stands up, and in obedience to Jesus, picks up the mat he was lying on and starts to walk (vs. 9).
- This healing happened to be on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees had outlined thirty-nine different classes of forbidden work on the Sabbath, and by taking up his mat, this man broke one of their oral traditions.

- What's sad is that these religious leaders couldn't rejoice at the wonderful deliverance of a man who'd been disabled for thirty-eight years!
- They were simply upset because their manmade standards and traditions had been broken.

Whatever religion cannot control, it seeks to kill.

- Religious legalism delights in calling out, "canceling," and poo-pooing anything and everything that God does that doesn't perfectly align with their manmade understanding of how God is supposed to operate.
- The Pharisees wanted a throat to choke and a person to blame for healing this man and breaking their laws (vs. 12-13).

Jesus had slipped away in the crowd after the miracle, but later found the man and warned him of a greater sickness: sin (vs. 14).

- Jesus hadn't come to simply give a physical healing—He'd come to give Himself, and this is the true miracle behind the miracle.
- As the man gave a report of what Jesus had done to make him well, the religious leaders looked to persecute Jesus for violating the Sabbath.

## THE FATHER AND THE SON (JOHN 5:17-23)

One of the ironies of John's Gospel is the presence of people who demand miracles from Jesus but are unable to accept them when they occur.

- The healing of the lame man by the pool of Bethesda made no difference to the religious leaders, who didn't care about the healed man or any of the amazing implications of the miracle.
- They just saw a religious rule broken and wanted to kill Jesus (vs. 18).

They didn't just want to kill Jesus because He broke the Sabbath; they wanted to kill Him because they saw Him as a blasphemer.

- The rabbis had conceded that God Himself still performed two kinds of work on the Sabbath: He judged and He created life.
- Therefore, when Jesus claimed He could work on the Sabbath because His Father did too, He was claiming to be equal to God (vs. 17).

Jesus, the Son of God, not only had authority over the Sabbath; this authority was grounded in relationship (vs. 19).

- Jesus carries with Him the authority of God the Father.
- Because Jesus is equal in nature with God the Father, His goals are identical to God's goals.
- Jesus' will was subordinate to the Father's so that people through Him could see the Father.

Healing a lame person was incredible and amazing, but there were greater works that Jesus would do (vs. 20).

- Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son also gives life to whom He wants (vs. 21).
- Not only does Jesus give life, Jesus has the authority to judge because the Father has granted that authority to Him (vs. 22).

All this talk of Jesus having the authority to raise the dead most certainly is an assurance of Jesus' power over physical death (John 11; 1 Cor. 15:20-22).

- Jesus also has the power to raise up human beings from their spiritual death.
- There is coming a day when Jesus will judge every person who has ever lived on planet earth (Acts 17:31).

Anyone who doesn't honor the Son doesn't honor the Father who sent Him (vs. 23).

- To receive and honor Jesus is to honor God, and to reject and dishonor Jesus is to dishonor God
- How do we dishonor Jesus?
- By refusing to believe in Him even as He's been sent by God to save us.
  - By refusing to obey Him even as He's proved Himself to be almighty God.

## WHAT WILL WE CHOOSE TO FOLLOW AND BELIEVE?

- Sometimes we assume we're following, believing, and honoring Jesus, but the truth is we're just familiar with the idea of Him.
- The truth is that we're following and believing traditions, manmade religion, or whatever transaction we're hoping Jesus will perform for us.
- No real honor of Jesus is happening in our lives.

## THE MIRACLES OR THE MESSAGE?

- Some of us come to Jesus in times of crisis needing a miracle, and Jesus doesn't turn us away when we come to Him.
- Jesus wants us to believe His Word and trust Him with every part of our lives—even if that means the miracle we're expecting from Him doesn't happen first.
- The greatest gift is Jesus Himself.

## OUR EXCUSES OR JESUS' WORD?

- We're all genuinely helpless without Jesus and need God's sovereign grace to be set free.
- But Jesus is standing right in front of us with the offer of salvation and freedom.
- Our excuses, our issues, and our sense of victimhood can become parts of our identity that stand between us and following Jesus.
- Do we even want to be healed?

## STUBBORN DISBELIEF OR OBEDIENT FAITH?

- One of the sad ironies of this life is the existence of people who demand miracles from God but are unable to accept them when they occur.
- This all simply reveals the necessity of faith: we must believe before we see, and we must believe in order to see.
- It comes down to the heart: will we honor Jesus as Lord by believing and obeying Him?