

John 4:43-54

Introduction

I. The purpose of the miraculous “signs” of Jesus is that people would “see” the sign and “believe” in the one who performs the sign.

II. But sometimes “seeing is not believing.” Sometimes seeing is just seeing.

The Passage

I. The context of Jesus’ seemingly insensitive statement in v. 48

A. The crowd’s excitement about Jesus (v. 45)

1. They want to see more amazing signs and wonders (John 2:23)
2. But Jesus’ is suspicious about the authenticity of their faith (John 2:24)
Is this real faith or is it just an excitement about the miracles?
Are they simply caught up in all the hype of this new celebrity?

B. A royal official’s desperate need (v. 46-47)

1. He is a man of considerable power, wealth, authority 0
2. He is a broken and desperate man
 - a. His son dying and he can’t do anything to prevent it
 - b. He hears about Jesus and thinks, “If I can just get him to come here, lay his hands on my son, maybe he can heal.”

II. Jesus’ dialogue with the man

A. Jesus’ seemingly cold response? (v. 48)

1. He is mainly addressing the crowds and their love for the spectacular
2. He is also addressing this man to see where his faith fits in with the crowds.
He is putting up a barrier to test this man’s faith and invite him to press in more

B. The man’s humble persistence (v. 49)

C. Jesus response (v. 50)

1. Jesus denies the request to go with the man to his home
2. He grants the request to heal his son
3. KEY: But Jesus gives no “sign” that his son is healed. He simply gives him his Word

D. The KEY PHRASE (v. 50)

Definition of Biblical Faith: “taking God at his word and acting accordingly”

III. The man’s experience (v. 51-54)

A. On the way home

He has an entire day to think about this. He has no sign, no physical presence of Jesus; he simply has to trust in the Word spoken to him

B. Arriving at home

He and his whole household learn that Jesus’ Word really is authoritative and true
Climax of the story: An entire family puts their faith in Jesus

IV. The crowd's faith vs. the man's faith

A. The crowd's faith = faith based on signs and wonders

1. Where do we see this kind of faith alive today?
 - a. Televangelists who have signs and wonders ministries
 - b. Church culture that is so focused on dynamic speakers/worship at the expense of God's Word
 - c. Personal lives:
 - 1) always needing concrete signs in our experience that show us God loves us and is with us (so that our faith goes up and down with our circumstances)
 - 2) having our religious activity (quiet times, etc) be dependent on always getting some great result or "sign" if we will continue in them
 - 3) needing clear circumstantial signs when we come to important decisions rather than going to God's word and making wise decisions based on Biblical principles
2. What is the problem with faith based on signs and wonders?
 - a. We're setting the terms with God. We become an audience, and God is required to perform and meet our expectations for us to remain engaged
 - b. This kind of faith is not a response to God himself, but simply to his signs. We don't develop a passion for an obedient relationship with God himself, but simply for more signs
 - c. This faith constantly needs more signs and wonders to sustain itself
3. The Great Example: unfaithful Israelites in the Old Testament
See Exodus – Joshua: They experienced all these signs and wonders, yet it did not lead to authentic trust and obedience to God

B. The man's faith = taking Jesus at his word and obeying

1. The benefits of this faith
 - a. Jesus sets the terms. He remains Lord, and his word speaks into our lives and elicits trust and obedience
 - b. This kind of faith is focused on God himself, who he is, what his character is, and what his promises are
 - c. This faith is not dependent on circumstances but rather on God's unchanging word
2. The Great Example: the faithful people of God in the Old Testament
 - a. See Hebrews 11:1-13
 - b. These were people who took God at his word even before they saw a sign. In fact, through faith, they "saw" the sign in advance and looked forward to it, even though they hadn't yet received it.

Conclusion

- I. Are we going to be seekers of signs or hearers and doers of the word?
- II. What promise from God's Word do you need to hold on to right now?
- III. What command from God's Word do you need to obey right now?

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. How did Jesus' interaction with this royal official add to, shape, or change your understanding of who he is, what he's like, or what he values?
3. Several modern examples of "sign-based faith" were mentioned on Sunday. Where do you see a sign-based faith alive and well in your own life or in your friends' lives?
4. While we were encouraged to base our faith on God's Word rather than signs and wonders, is there an appropriate role for "signs" in our lives today? If so, what role should they have in our Christian lives? Have you experienced a positive role of signs in your own life?
5. As you consider your life right now, what specific promise from Scripture do you need to hold onto, and what command from Scripture do you need to obey?