

## Sermon for Trinity 21 – John 4:46-54

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Our Lord comes again to Cana in Galilee. If we know anything about Cana in the life of Christ, we know that there was a wedding there. At this wedding, when the wine had run out, He turned water to wine. This was our Lord's first miracle, as recorded by John. Now, Jesus returns to the region of Cana in Galilee once again. Can lightning strike in the same place twice?

There was an official there whose son was ill. As an official, this man was big important stuff. To be in this position of authority, he was either related to Herod's family or had close connections with the king. He was likely well thought of, revered, and probably quite wealthy, too. Nonetheless, just as God in His time exalts the lowly, He also in his time, has His way of humbling the exalted. For this official, it was his son who was made ill. Yes, his son is even at the point of death. The changes and hardships of life bring us low, too. And this is not always a bad thing.

For this official, as great as he was, is brought to his knees. He has nowhere to turn. Well, not "nowhere." He heard that Jesus can from Judea to Galilee. And hearing Jesus is the beginning of faith. No matter how weak and flimsy his faith is, no matter how much of a last resort it is, nonetheless, Christ is the Savior, and any faith put in Him as such is not misplaced. To this point, John refers to the faith of this official three times throughout this story: before Christ's promise, after the promise of healing, and again after he gets word that the promise is fulfilled.

This treasure of faith that the Lord gave to the official is one that must be practiced, used, and even tested to retain its benefits. We must grasp Christ firmly and cling to Him and His Word with our hearts. Imagine the physical treasure that you value most in this world. Do you keep it in a paper bag or in a locked safe? Christ's Word of promise is that precious to us. When trials and difficulties come along, they strengthen our faith to cling to Christ's promise.

As you endure the present hardships that you face, or you have faced, or you will face in the future because we know this world and what can happen, this is God forming you to trust Him and His Word, which is most important. The Lord is taking your paper bag and making it into a sturdier vessel. Paul said it this way: take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand the evil day, and having done all to stand firm. Cross, temptation, and adversity must come. In these, faith grows and becomes strong.

After the official's request, our Lord sets out to put this man's faith to the test: "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." With this response, our Lord is intent, as always, to steer the conversation to salvation. The official is talking about the healing of his son, who is near death. He doesn't want to lose him in this life. Christ is also talking about the

official's son, but also the official himself, and the rest of his household. He doesn't want to lose them in the life to come.

So the call of faith in Christ continues from the man: "Lord, come down before my child dies." Jesus then grants his request with a promise: "Go; your son will live." Notice, this is a promise. The man has no proof of the good condition of his son. Being near death as he was, he has no proof that his son is still even alive. But the official believed the word of that Jesus spoke. He trusted this word. His little faith, his little trust, has now grown. He believes the word of Christ without seeing and he goes on his way.

So as he was journeying, before the official arrived at his home, his servants met him on the way and told him that his son was recovering. It was done for him as he believed. Christ's word of promise was true and as such, what word of promise that the Lord spoke could not be true? If the healing of this official's son was a small thing to Christ and was done simply by a word, what could He not accomplish? Not even death itself could stand as victor before Him!

And the official asks for further confirmation of what he already knew when he asked the servants what hour his son began to get better. "Yesterday at the seventh hour..." This was the same time that Christ spoke to him His word of promise, "Your son will live." The seventh hour, by our reckoning of time would be about one o'clock in the afternoon. Very likely that day, the sun shone brightly as Christ proclaimed eternal life for the official and his family. It was the seventh hour.

Later in the Gospel accounts, from the sixth hour to the ninth hour on the Friday we call "Good," the sun did not shine brightly. In fact darkness covered over it from noon to three, by our reckoning. Our Lord was yet again keeping his word of promise. "For [the Son of Man] will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." Christ died our death. He conquered death for us and rose again.

The Crucified Christ is the sign and symbol of our salvation, of our eternal life. "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." But the cross was not the end of Him. He rose again. "Your Son will live."

The official himself believed and all his household. As do we. We hold to God's Word of promise. We have faith and hope, even without seeing. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed but abides forever." Because of Christ's death for you, you have eternal life. Let it be done for you as you believe. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠