

John 4:46-54

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[0 : 0 0] Again, the scripture reading is John 4, 46 through 54, on page 985 in the White Bibles. Please stand for the reading of God's Word.

So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum, there was an official whose son was ill. When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.

So Jesus said to him, unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. The official said to him, sir, come down before my child dies.

Jesus said to him, go, your son will live. The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering.

So he asked them the hour when he began to get better. And they said to him, yesterday at the seventh hour, the fever left him. The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, your son will live.

[1 : 1 8] And he himself believed and all his household. This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, with another academic year arriving on the doorstep, let this one thing be clear.

I was not the best of students. Yet, even somebody like myself could get on to the purposes of the course when the professor spoke with clarity, simplicity, and abandon all sense of subtlety.

I think I would have fared well if the writer to John's gospel had been one of my teachers. There's a clarity, simplicity, a lack of subtlety in today's text that enables the most average of readers access to what is important.

Listen for it and see if you, even like me, can pause long enough to hear what he takes as significant.

[3 : 1 3] First of all, he's going to lay this out by the way he frames the story. Take a look at verse 46. So he came again to Galilee where he had made the water wine.

But the professor in him closes out by way of bookends. Verse 54. This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he'd come from Judea to Galilee.

And if his clarity needed help by way of repetitive force, look at the way he transitioned into the story beginning at verse 43.

After two days he departed to Galilee. For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his hometown. So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast.

For they too had gone to the feast. So now he's in Cana in Galilee where he made water wine. Not only does he frame this story with a word of significance, that word is three times over listed in the transition to the story.

[4 : 34] And furthermore, it evokes the reader's memory of a previous moment in the story. The wedding at Cana.

Chapter 2 and verse 1. That wedding story also bracketed by this term of significance. Chapter 2 verse 1. John is saying to the most average of readers, there is something significant about Galilee.

Which ought to make us wonder. What is it about Galilee that's intended for our good?

What can we say about Galilee? About this place that John wants you to take home with you today?

Why is it that you have an emphasis that if you want to get the goods that Jesus has to offer, you've got to go to Galilee? It's ironic.

[6 : 02] This repetitive melody to this point in his message of the place called Galilee.

It's ironic because the main thing we've been learning over the weeks is God is not linked to a particular place. So the whole point of chapter 2 and the cleansing of the temple was to say you don't have to go there anymore to get God.

The same thing with the woman at the well. You don't have to go to Gerizim or Jerusalem. In other words, there's no such thing as important place.

There's no sacred space. You can get to God from wherever you are. And yet, almost by way of counterpoint to the melody, is this significance of Galilee.

I want to pause on that and think about it because he's now framed two signs within that term.

[7 : 15] So what do we know about Galilee? One of the early mentions in the Scripture comes from Joshua chapter 20 in verses 1 through 9.

At a moment when God is revealing to His people that there ought to be places to which people can go to get a fair hearing before justice is executed upon them by an avenger.

They were called cities of refuge. And the first place or city of refuge is listed as being in Galilee.

In other words, it was the first of, in today's terms, what people politicized their way through to the understanding of a sanctuary city.

The first sanctuary city was in Galilee. If you had murdered somebody unintentionally and knew that the law was running for you, you could get to a city in Galilee wherein no one could harm you until there was an appropriate trial that may or may not condemn you.

[8 : 42] This was especially important if the law you had broken, you had intended no harm and it had been unintentional in regard to its effect.

In other words, Galilee signified a place where desperate people dwell. People who were in need of protection and in fear of execution of judgment before that protection was granted or even a word was given.

Think of it now. Now, Jesus is beginning to reveal Himself repetitively in Galilee.

Let me give you another instance. 1 Kings 9, verses 10-13. Galilee is mentioned again. This time, Solomon has just finished building the temple and his own house.

And the resources and the timber and all the things he got to complete, both the temple and the house, had been given to him by Hirzom, another king.

[10 : 09] And that king was now ready for payment. And it says that Solomon gave to him the cities of Galilee. Galilee. So, with this gift in hand, the king makes a trip and this is what he says.

What are these things you have given to me? When he arrived in Galilee, it actually says it was an displeasing place to him.

Which speaks volumes. Galilee Galilee is historically an unpleasing place. It's a place that would not have been worthy as a gifted recipient.

Think of it. Put those two together. Jesus now enters into the place where people need protection. into the place that people find unpleasing.

Into the place where there is desperation, difficulty, deception, and yet honest attempts to move forward in life.

[11 : 29] Let me give you a third. Isaiah chapter 9 verses 1 and 2. Isaiah will write that in the time of darkness a light will dawn in Galilee.

It's right on the cusp of where we get that wonderful Christmas message which echoes through the times of a wonderful Savior, of a promised one that will arrive in Bethlehem.

In other words, Galilee is a place where people go who know they are in trouble and in need of protection. It's a place where people dwell that others on the outside find unpleasing.

And it's a place of God's promise where the saving grace of His power would be made known.

God's love to God's love I don't know if John could have painted with any brighter colors or broader strokes the significance for you and me on these first two signs that take place in Cana at Galilee.

[12 : 48] It is as though John would have you know if you want to know where you go to see God at work go to where people are desperately in need of protection.

Go to where there is an unpleasing sense among the cultured and the elite. Go to the place of promise which is the dwelling at the bottom.

Go to a place literally where Jesus went to rescue a failed wedding and a place to which he goes where the plans for a funeral were already in place.

Those are the two signs. A marriage that is beginning without any proper celebratory ability and a place where an official's son is dying.

This is where Jesus works. and I think it's significant for you and for me. Until or unless you view yourself in need of an advocate before God, Jesus is not coming to your hometown.

[14 : 16] unless you view yourself as dwelling among the unpleasantries of life that would be helped by his person, he's not coming to your home.

Unless you feel as though you dwell in darkness and are unsure of how to go forward, he's not appearing to you, but if you do, if you sense in your soul that you need an advocate before the law executes and avenges blood, if you need the protection of one who could speak for you when you cannot speak for yourself, if you need a promise that he can really reach you from where you are, you're not ready for Jesus.

And so this entire wonderful, beautifully executed story, the second sign of the own revealing, is in Galilee.

Are you willing to say, this is the residence of my heart? this is the sign over my door post. This is the name upon my head. I dwell desperately in the region of Galilee.

Certainly that's the way the man felt. This official who had seen the work of Christ because in chapter two, after being in Cana at the wedding, it says Jesus departed for Capernaum, which is where this man is from, some twenty miles to the east on the sea of Galilee.

[16 : 21] And it says that the people in Capernaum also began to see the things he did. So now when this man hears that Jesus has returned to Cana, that Jesus is only twenty miles away from his home, where Jesus is living out works in Galilee, he rises and he runs for the one o'clock miracle.

He runs to get to Jesus thinking that perhaps there is help for his son.

What does Jesus have to offer for people who run to him in desperation?

And why might that be significant for you? Look at the text. What Jesus claims to have at his disposal for any man, woman, or child here today who feels himself to be unworthy in his presence and in need of his advocacy, who knows himself to be unpleasing in the sight of God and desirous of his coming, who understands what it is to be completely without light and direction and a knowledge of which way to go.

this is what he has to offer. Look at his words. Verse 50, Go, your son will live.

[18 : 06] Repeat it again in verse 53 when it picks up almost in the mouth now of the official.

He remembers when Jesus had said to him, your son will live. In other words, what John is saying to him and to you who read about him, that if you're from Galilee, Jesus has at his disposal life for you and for those whom you love.

Think about it. Not just for you, you and for those whom you love. The man was desperate for the mercy of Jesus to rest upon the life of his son.

Life. Now don't mishear me. This does not mean that in every instance Jesus will heal you from physical sickness.

It does not mean that temporal bodily life is your trump card in prayer in regard to what he's obligated to perform for you.

[19 : 39] Rather, you have to remember that death is the consequence of sin and that what Jesus is bringing about and the message of the Bible unfolds is that while death was the penalty for Adam's sin and therefore all die in Christ though we die yet shall we live.

That life in the scriptures is more than simply the ongoing perpetuity of your personhood. It is a restored relationship with God and this man and his son stand as representatives in the physical domain of what Jesus can do for anyone before God.

That's the message of the scriptures. And so I proclaim it to you today. Jesus is here this morning walking the aisles not through some mysterious manifestation but through the power of this very word.

He is in this word declaring to you that life is available to you and to those you love. that you can have what he promises to give and those who you desperately cry out for as well.

And so the question is that ought to be in all our minds as we move really through the third and then the climactic moment of this whole scene and message is how how how do I get what he has to give given where I live.

[21 : 37] Where do I live? Galilee. What do I need? Life. How? Now, the text beautifully in verse 50 climactically tells you what you need this morning.

Jesus said to him, go, your son will live. The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.

Let's stop on that. the life that we long for comes by listening to and living under the word spoken by Jesus.

That's what happened to the man. The life that he longed for came to him and his son by listening to and then living under that word.

It didn't need any other sign. At this point, this is where the details of the story just become placed clearly even for a C student.

[23 : 00] The beautiful intricacy of it. Let me show it to you. It's obvious that Jesus was frustrated over their need for signs instead of simply taking him at his word.

I mean, when the official comes and he says to him, notice, come down and heal my son. And he's going to say that again in verse 49.

Sir, come down before my child dies. What he's trying to say is, I need to get you to the place to do the things you can do. And Jesus, like a frustrated parent when a child doesn't realize they just need to take you at your word rather than have you demonstrate that their word is okay.

He says, unless you, and the you there is plural, unless you all seen signs, you're just not going to believe. there's a frustration that grows. Why?

Because according to Jesus, whatever he declares in Cana can already be at work in Capernaum.

[24 : 11] What he says here is powerful there. I mean, this is the transformative moment for you this morning.

You need to know that if Jesus speaks a word for your welfare into the ear of the Father in heaven, it is effectuated on earth.

Think of it. Where do you got to go? You merely need his word to say, I give you life.

You don't need to sit in your room and hope you have an apparition of Jesus tonight. You don't need to come into some experiential moment where you're like, I don't know, but I had the sense of the numinous and God was with me.

You don't need to work your way out of your problem or see your way clear. All you need is for Jesus to speak a word. And if you believe that word, the word is the transforming power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[25 : 26] Let me put it to you as clearly as I know how. If you have the word of Christ, you have the presence of Christ. Now the church could learn this today and some of you didn't hear that.

You have the presence of Christ wherein you have his word and you don't need any other sign. Is Jesus with me? Do I have his word?

Think of it. The same thing happens in Revelation with John and the vision where he's drawn up into heaven and Jesus has said to be in the midst of the churches of seven lampstands.

Well how is it that he's in the midst of the churches? How does Jesus rule his church? How do you know he's here? How do you know he's here this morning? Well in Revelation twice John was told write this down write this down and then go into the church and read these words in other words in Revelation God dwelt in the midst of the church through the word written down and it's the same thing here he's here today where is he in his word but I need more unless you have more will you not believe this ought to give you great confidence think about it if you have the word of Christ you have the presence of Christ if you pray today he's at the right hand of the father if he should speak a word if he should just say a word into the father's ear his will immediately takes effect on earth thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven and how is that will effectuated simply here it says the word the man believed the word that

Jesus spoke to him and so the frustration of Jesus on signs is met by the undercurrent of simple belief simple belief and then the story wonderfully confirms that by he gets back and they say you know your son your son's actually on demand and his first question isn't I can't believe it his first question is when when and they go what about one o'clock miracle and then he goes that was the very moment he said to me your son will live if you know that you need the advocacy of God to stand joyfully in his presence and you say Lord Lord be my advocate he will if you say

[28 : 40] Lord you know I live in the land of the unpleasing that there is nothing inherently worthy of me that anyone else would like he will say you are the place to which I will go if you run to him he does not need to come to you other than your reception of his word receptivity to God's word is everything not only does his frustration with our sense of signs go forward but let me just close with two pictures if I could two pictures that that demonstrate this same thing two parallels that life comes through word received the first is from an ancient prophet named Isaiah in chapters 8 and 9 he was so frustrated with the people that wouldn't receive his word as a prophet that he finally says look seal this seal what

I'm saying down write this stuff down and then he says I am the sign in other words my words are what you need and if you abandon my word and try to run off to find God in another way you will be left in darkness and it's at that very moment that he says in a later time by the sea in Galilee will come one upon them that are dwelling in darkness a light will shine John will later pick it up and say he is!

the very light of the world entering into the world he is obviously making a sense that in Jesus you have Isaiah fulfilled the other picture is equally brilliant there's a widow in Zarephath in 1st Kings 17 mirroring beautifully the woman at the well and the healing of the official son the widow in Zarephath finds Elijah coming to her and he says to her woman give me a drink and she's in the midst of all of her human needs just as Jesus will later come to the woman at the well that we saw last week and the week before and say woman give me a drink and you will see that just as Elijah was the very man of God so too is Jesus and just after that woman at Zarephath and the drink illustration you will find her own son dies just as here you have an official son dying and in the woman's son dies and

Elijah brings him back to life in fact he actually says your son lives just as in this chapter go your son will live and it concludes with the verse that the woman says now I know that you are the man of God because in your word is the word of God so the transference is from signs to faith and word and these two pictures are beautifully put together so that what John is saying to you today in as comprehensive terms as I can tell you while you don't have to go to any special place to meet God you do have to come from Galilee and if you're unwilling to stand before God and say I need a place to run

I need a sanctuary city I gotta hide before the avenger takes my life that's the kind of scene that Jesus shines in if you know that you are unpleasing not only to God but to others and you already sense it that you're on the outside not the inside Jesus is here for you if you're looking for the fulfillment of all of Isaiah's prophecies of all of Elijah's content if you're looking for the Old Testament wherein we hear a Savior is coming to understanding the New Testament wherein a Savior has come and when you begin to see that the Savior that is coming and the Savior that has come is fulfilled in the person and work of Christ and all I need is to believe trust lean bend grab hold not let go of that word then I'm good if you do that this morning he'll hear your prayer he'll give you!

[33 : 38] and beyond that you concerned for your family he can get that done too your son will live verse 53 and he himself believed and all his household take all your soul troubles today to Jesus!

because what he says from heaven has immediate force today may your heart be made new!

Our heavenly father Lord this Jesus that we're reading about is beyond our wildest dreams and I pray that we would all each one be saved and given life through a trusting in his word Lord we therefore praise you that you are not far off that you are near that your work in our life is near is as near as our prayers to you and your word of grace to us may it be so for each one in Jesus name Amen Amen