

Hearing Is Believing

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[0:00] This opening introduction, this illustration, is a bit aimed. And so if you don't have children or grandchildren, just pretend.

! Two young men have asked your daughter to marry them at the same time.

! Your daughter asks you, which one should I marry? You give it some thought.

Your two options are fine young men. Johnny, he's got great hair. Sharp dresser.

Well composed, socially engaging. And it looks like his future is financially set. The problem, though, with Johnny is that he's a flatterer.

[1:11] He's a sweet talker. And you've witnessed yourself. You've seen him flatter your daughter. Sweet talker. In order to get what he wants.

In fact, he's even sweet talk to you before. So it's left you kind of like, hmm. Not sure about Johnny. I love his hair. And then there's Demetrius.

Demetrius is a little rough around the edges. But man, does he love the Lord. In fact, here's how he's rough around the edges. I mean, he's humble. He's honest.

But whenever you're talking to him, on the side, you're kind of counting the number of swear words he uses. But boy, does he love the Lord. Whenever you see your daughter with Demetrius, you see something happening to her.

He's in it for her. She comes out of spending time with him, having this sense that there are no ulterior motives in this young man.

[2:12] But he's got her best interest in mind. Who should I marry? A couple weeks ago, we learned from Jesus that Jesus was sent on a search and rescue mission of sorts to search and find true worshipers of the living God.

Those who would worship God in spirit and in truth. And the way that Jesus brings about true worshipers is he gives them new life.

He gives them the Holy Spirit who is like this spring within them that wells up into eternal life and they become worshipers of the living God. And for the last few weeks, we've been seeing all sorts of very interesting, different people become worshipers of the living God.

I mean, first we saw this guy named Nicodemus. He's this religious professional. And then we saw this Samaritan adulteress. She believed. Her whole kind of town believed.

And this morning we're going to see a really powerful and influential person see and believe. In fact, this passage that we're looking at this morning, this is John chapter four, verses 43 through 54.

[3:36] It's on page 1057 of your Pew Bible. This passage, we're going to see two groups, two different groups of people who are pursuing Jesus. They're seeking him.

But they're seeking him with different motives. And so the question that we're going to ask and answer is, who will Jesus choose to give eternal life?

Between those who are seeing and believing and those who are hearing and believing, which ones will Jesus say, you're mine?

Now, so here, H-E-A-R, John 4, 43 through 54. After the two days, he, Jesus, departed for 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 he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine.

[4:44] 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, which is 1 p.m., the fever left him.

The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, your son will live. And he himself believed in all his household.

[5:45] This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee. So I'm going to make two points in the sermon. If you want to follow in the notes, point number one is seeing is believing.

And point number two is hearing is believing. So let's look at this first group who are pursuing Jesus, who have adopted this kind of mindset of seeing is believing.

And we see it in verses 43 and 45. In 43, we learn that after two days, Jesus departed for Galilee.

And just to remind you, he has spent the last two days in Samaria of all places in a town called Sychar. And just to remind you, back in 4-1, Jesus was down in southern Israel and Judea.

And he got word that he was starting to get a certain kind of attention that he didn't want to get. And so he's like, I got to go north. And at that point, in order to get to northern Israel, he had to make a decision.

[6:51] Am I going to go around Samaria or am I going to go through Samaria to get to Galilee? And he decides, I'm going through because we learned after the fact that he had an evangelistic appointment with this certain Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

And lo and behold, the whole town comes out eventually. And they, with kind of one voice, declare, you can see it in verse 42, they said to the woman, it's no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves.

And we know this, this is indeed the Savior of the world. Eternal life had come to Sychar. Salvation had arrived. This might even be the planting of the first church of Sychar.

It's extraordinary. A bunch of Samaritans believing in a Jewish Messiah. And then if you look at verse 45, we read this. So when he came to Galilee, so he's moved out of Samaria, come to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him.

Welcome, Jesus. Come stay with us. You need a car, Jesus? Use my car. You want to go to Chick-fil-A, Jesus? Come, come, come. Hang out with us. You are welcome here.

[8:16] Come. Come. Come. But we're told why they welcome him. 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. They had seen all that he had done while he was in Jerusalem. That's referring to back in John chapter 2. That's where Jesus is down at the feast of Passover.

And that's, remember, where he cleared out the temple because people were making it essentially a marketplace and they were trying to make money at the selling of goods to offer.

And so it ceased becoming a house of worship and it had become a place of buying and selling for people to make money. apparently he must have done some other miraculous things because these Galileans are referred to as having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem.

You might be asking the question, well, what's wrong with that? What's wrong with welcoming the healer? The miracle worker? What's wrong with that?

[9:36] Well, in verse 44, there's this little parenthetical statement John puts in. He says, for Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his hometown.

And what that is doing is helping you understand what's going on in verse 45, the nature of this welcome. There's this proverb that's attributed to Jesus here.

A prophet has no honor in his hometown. How does that work? A prophet doesn't have any honor in his hometown. What kind of works like this? Jesus was from Galilee.

He grew up in Nazareth. It's just down the street from Cana. He grew up in Nazareth. People were familiar with him. They knew he was a carpenter and his human father was a carpenter. And here's what happens. Because people are familiar with you in that way, they feel like they know you, they've seen you grow up, they have a harder time believing that you are actually been appointed by God to speak God's very words.

[10:49] They become skeptical that you are a speaker of God thus saith the Lord and with that comes some serious weight.

You don't mess with a prophet. So what this means is that Jesus is aware when he leaves Samaria that as he moves into Galilee, he is not going to be honored by everybody.

He's moving into dishonor. Do you know why? Because he knows that there are some who will honor him. Jesus does call himself a prophet here, but he's not just any prophet.

He is the ultimate prophet because he himself is God in the flesh. He is God revealed just by walking around.

He makes God known and whatever he say is God's word. He's the ultimate full and final revelation of God and some of you right now have Hebrews chapter 1 ringing in your head.

[12:09] So let me just read it. Long ago at many times and in many ways God spoke to our fathers by the prophets but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son whom he appointed the heir of all things.

Through him also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. This is just no prophet showing up.

This is the prophet God in the flesh. And so Jesus knows that he goes into Galilee that what awaits him is not honor but mostly dishonor.

And he's going in like I said because there are some in Galilee who are going to believe in him.

When he's being welcomed by these Galileans he's being welcomed by people that want to see some signs and wonders.

They have apparently forgotten about his whole cleansing of the temple piece and they want Jesus to do some song and dance for them. When Jesus cleansed the temple he was rebuking people for making God's place a place of buying and selling.

[13:38] Here what we're becoming aware of and what we'll see in a rebuke in verse 48 is he's rebuking these Galileans for making him into some kind of entertainer for them.

Welcome Jesus. Can we have some goosebumps? Welcome Jesus. Would you mind wowing us with your wonders?

We've got an empty tank and we need to be wandered up. These Galileans welcomed Jesus not because of who Jesus is and what he has to say but they welcomed him to be entertained to be wowed to be impressed and if you want to think about those two young men we started the sermon with these Galileans were more like Johnnies.

this welcome was flattery. It's just sweet talk to get to what they want and what they want is not what Jesus is there to give.

Jesus will you do a little song and dance number for us today? They have no idea he's God's ultimate prophet. In verse 48 Jesus says this unless you all that's not a singular you it's a plural you unless you all see signs and wonders you all will not believe that is a rebuke he's like he's like you're not going to believe even if I did signs and wonders!

[15:27] If I don't do them you're not going to believe the purpose of this is we're seeing a people who are building their faith upon one religious experience after another they are building their faith on signs and wonders now is it wrong to experience God and to experience a movement of his Holy Spirit no but when you build your faith on that and that becomes the object of your faith it will not deliver imagine a chronically sleep deprived man who keeps guzzling coffee and when the coffee runs out he grabs a Red Bull and when the Red Bull runs out he grabs a monster and when the monster runs out he grabs a five hour energy drink this guy is going to be flipping out what he's doing he's just trying to stay awake he's just trying to keep the energy going and what many

Christians can do today is move from one religious experience like one caffeine rush after another that's what they really want they really want to get juiced and they make the object of their faith something other than Jesus this approach to Christianity is not walking by the spirit walking by the spirit is the fulfillment of the promised new covenant in which God would dwell in us by his spirit and he would move in us internally so that we would obey his word and live for him so that the spirit becomes this spring bubbling up of eternal life enriches our delight to live for the one and only God have you ever heard someone say in terms of believing in the existence of

God something like this you know what when I see the facts when there's kind of cold hard scientific evidence then I'll believe it's kind of a seeing as believing approach to whether God exists or not or maybe do you remember Thomas at the end of the gospel of John listen listen to this so the other disciples told him we have seen the Lord but he Thomas said to them unless I see his hands in his hands the marks of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side I will never believe this this mindset of seeing is believing is elevate something above God's very words it's a common mindset in our culture today and it goes something like this in order to be convinced that something is actually true you need to experience it with your senses mindset has crept into the church today because the goal of many

Christians is to have an experience versus faith in the sole object of Jesus experiences will come but they are no way to take the place of Jesus the kind of experiences that we're talking about are emotional worship how was worship today it was great what they're talking about is an experience that people want to have a sense of God himself speaking to them people want to have a sense of they interpret the events of their lives as signs from God because it's experience essential we're told to not walk by sight but to walk by faith so all that

I want you to see here in this seeing is believing is that there was a group of people who were welcoming Jesus and they were like show us something really good sadly they were in it for themselves and that's not genuine faith so we move from this seeing is believing crowd to now hearing is believing and we see this played out in verses 46 through 54 and there's this contrast between the Galileans who welcomed Jesus and they wanted to experience something from Jesus and they're contrasted with an official from Capernaum who heard of Jesus and who believed in the word of Jesus in verse 46 we read that

[21:02] Jesus came again to Cana in Galilee where he had made the water wine that was the first sign of the gospel of John there are seven signs in the gospel of John and the result of that earlier sign and John was that his disciples believed and while we're on the topic of signs let me just help you think about how signs are to function signs and wonders are not to be the object of our faith signs and wonders are to direct our faith onto the sole object of our faith God himself if you want to please turn with me to the end of the gospel of John John chapter 20 verse 30 and 31 this is the purpose statement of the gospel of John and here's how it reads now

Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book but these are written these signs are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and by believing you may have eternal life the purpose of signs is to direct our gaze to Jesus to behold him to believe him to find life in him so we don't pursue signs and wonders to pursue signs and wonders we pursue Jesus verses 46 and 47 this official is in Capernaum and he hears that Jesus has come to Galilee and so he goes and it's a 22 mile uphill climb from Capernaum to Cana and he goes because we learn at the end of 47 that not only is his son sick his son is sick to the point of death he's on the verge of death now this official is having to do with the government but when you hear official don't think about the pleasant people who work at the

DMV I know they're wonderful folks don't think of that wonderful person who is supervising your polling place when you go and vote it's not that kind of official the word official that we see here used throughout this passage it means someone on the king's court it's referring to someone who has incredible influence they have the king's ear this is someone who who has a lot of political juice and not only is this guy kind of kind of in close to Herod Antipas who was the tetrarch king of Galilee at this time by the way he's the guy that that beheaded John the Baptist so not only does he have his ear this official from Capernaum he's got some money he's got some jingle because when he goes back to

Capernaum he is met by a number of his servants multiple servants which means he has some kind of financial reserves and resources but here's the thing this man's political connections and whatever amount of money he had they were not doing him any good in light of his dying son they couldn't help him none of his connections none of his money everything he was so desperate so when he hears about Jesus and he must have heard that he had healing powers he's like I gotta go we many of us have had children or we know of people with children who have been sick to the point of death and it just pulls on you how desperate you can get so in verse 47 he hears that Jesus he hears that Jesus was close by and so he he goes to him and he asks Jesus he asks him to come down to Capernaum with him and to heal his son so the question is is this guy pursuing miraculous signs or is he is this genuine faith look what Jesus says verse 48 and it's kind of surprising you're like whoa that's kind of harsh that's a little cold Jesus he says in verse 48 Jesus said to him unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe here's this desperate official this dad with a dying son and Jesus is like unless you see signs and wonders will not believe of this man's heart why is he there is he there for wow or is he there for genuine belief in

[26:33] Jesus no matter how small is he believing in Jesus this should ring the bell Mark chapter 7 Jesus is a very similar interaction with the Syrophenician woman in which he tests her to see about the genuineness of their faith in verse 49 very politely this man says sir and he's not asking questions anymore come down before my child dies I hope you feel the desperation of that it's like it's like this official did not hear what Jesus just said and the reason why he didn't hear what Jesus just said is he's not there for signs and wonders he is there for his son and it's you Jesus that is my only hope that he will live in verse 50

Jesus recognizes that this little amount of faith is enough he's not seeking to be wowed he is seeking him he's seeking Jesus so he says go your son will live note he doesn't go with the man he just says go your son will live and this man who does not see his son healed at the moment this man goes and what I want you to see in verse 50 is what said about him Jesus says go your son will live the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way hearing is believing he goes on his way he believed the word that Jesus spoke look back at chapter 4 verses 41 and 42 and many more Samaritans believed because of his word and they said to the woman it's no longer because of what you said that we believe for we have heard for ourselves from him and we know that this indeed is the savior of the world hearing is believing seeing is not believing hearing is believing hearing the word from

Jesus in 51 through 53 we have this very interesting confirmation it's the next day and the official is walking downhill to Capernaum and he meets several of his servants coming uphill and they have something really interesting to say to him they tell him that his son is recovering they tell him he's no longer on the brink of death that he's been delivered from death and what this man asks is what time did that happen what what was the hour that he began to get better and they said to him yesterday at one o'clock the fever left him and so we get a sense of the illness it was some kind of fever that was putting him on the verge of death and they say hey it about one o'clock I remember it yeah

I remember it was about one o'clock that the fever left him it was one o'clock where he was delivered from death to which the father says by the way verse 53 is the first time the word father is used of this man the father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him your son will live here's why that's significant that means Jesus healed his son instantaneously from a distance with no apparent effort instantaneously from a distance with no apparent effort there was no sense that Jesus says your son will live he said it and what this this father puts together is this this man has the power to bring my son back from dying from a distance instantaneously and with no effort in verse 54 we are told that this is the second sign of

Jesus and remember in chapter 20 verse 31 that the purpose of a sign is to bring about faith in Jesus to believe in him so look at verse 53 the father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him your son will live and he himself believed!

[31:40] they believe the whole gang believes they put it all together could you imagine the conversation his servants tell him what they told him and he's like you will not believe what just happened Jesus said that and it happened and then when he shows up back at home in Capernaum he's

like you will not believe why our son is now living Jesus who's in Cana said so who is this guy that even a fever obeys him from a distance instantaneously with no seeming effort the whole household believes that includes the servants they had come to see in some measure that Jesus is the son of God the Christ and as a result of believing that eternal life had come to their home in

Capernaum their faith was not in the miracle their faith was in the worker of the miracle the one who brought it about my guess is that that whole household having believed in Jesus and everybody's now healthy they're like hey let's go back to Cana let's go say hi let's go say thank you and that little boy who was healed would go over to Jesus and could you imagine Jesus thank you so much for delivering me twice thank the penalty of my sin what I want you to notice is verse 50 the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way hearing is believing we build our faith not on our experience but on the person and words of Jesus Christ so we have two groups of people two motives and this passage contrasts them we have the seeing is believing Johnny types who are in it for themselves who are flatterers who are wanting to make Jesus dance for them and then you have the hearing is believing Demetrius types one is sign centric the other is Christ centric that's this royal official and his household not only was their son healed but their whole household was saved as a result of believing in Jesus the difference of course is the object of their faith seeing is believing make signs and wonders the object of faith experience maybe it's making science the object of your faith maybe it's making your works all I need to do is be better the object of your faith maybe it's making your church tradition the object of your faith maybe if I keep on going to church every Sunday I'll be saved but none of that has the power to save you hearing is believing it's

Jesus Christ who is totally God and totally man and in him is eternal life because he himself died on the cross and was raised from the dead and he offers eternal life to all who would believe the point of this whole passage is that in order for you to receive eternal life you must believe in Jesus alone he is the sole object of your faith and that comes by hearing and hearing the word of God now you might be asking a question like this well how much faith do I need what what kind of quality of faith do I need in order to believe in Jesus and receive eternal life what what kind of faith do I need how much faith do I need this past week I caught a clip of Tim Keller who was a recently has died but he was a pastor of a church in

Manhattan and he said this it's not the quality of your faith that saves you but the object of your faith it's not the quality of your faith it's the object of it's January in Wisconsin and they go out onto a frozen lake in order to ice fish the mom has done this for decades she knows the ice is 12 inches thick she knows you could drive a red peterbilt dump truck over the ice no problem she hears the cracking no big deal she's done it knows it she trusts it but her daughter who's five years old this is she and so she just kind of walks out onto the ice every time it cracks she gets a little nervous she's like mommy mommy will this ice hold our weight are we going to fall through like those boys did and it's a wonderful life is that going to happen to us she's just kind of afraid we have different qualities of faith on the ice you have the mom's high quality faith on the ice she knows she's relaxed but we also have this little girl who is nervous she's just got a little faith but she's out on the ice the point is it's not the quality of your faith you can have a very little faith and a really big savior and that's all that's needed because it's about the object of your faith that saves you it's not having faith in faith it's it's having faith in

[37:59] Jesus what he says his finished work on the cross 12 inches of ice is hard to argue with and so is Christ's death and resurrection you can trust that with a lot of faith or a little!

faith any kind of faith it's the object of your faith and he will grant you eternal life have you put your faith in Jesus or have you been seeing is believing it another thing I want to draw to your attention is that Jesus is the savior of the world we've now encountered a well-to-do politician who believes in Jesus a couple weeks before we saw an adulterous Samaritan come to faith in Jesus a week before we saw Nicodemus this religious professional who eventually demonstrates faith in Jesus these are very different people but they all have the same object of faith Jesus Christ what they all have in common is Jesus it's true of us as a church we have quite a mix of people in this sanctuary from all sorts of different walks of life but we all share one common object of faith the crucified and risen

Jesus who is seated at the right hand of God and one day closer to coming back he's at the center of everything we do it's true of the universal church right now around the throne room of heaven we have people from every tribe tongue and nation multitudes and multitudes that no one can count who are worshiping Jesus Christ right now you see he's the savior of the world and when more and more people from different walks of life come together as one local body it brings about some challenges but it also brings about a multicultural richness of what Jesus himself can do the third piece I just want to apply it and I want to encourage you to act there's a few different things that we learned about Jesus he moves towards dishonor for us he did that for us he tests hearts and so when we pray you can better believe he's going to test our motives when we pray but he also heals from a distance

I've been encouraged all week to be praying for things because my king is alive and even though he's at a distance he's at the right hand of God seated on his throne he can still heal instantaneously from a distance without any effort which means we pray we ask him for things we ask him to move in people's lives we ask him to heal the sick to give strength to the weak and when he does and he has we don't put our faith in the miracles we put more faith in the miracle worker our king Jesus the sole object of our faith we started this sermon with the question well who would you recommend to your daughter to marry Johnny nice hair but a flatterer or Demetrius rough around the edges but man he's you have no question that he's in it for your daughter who would you recommend I think it's pretty obvious right well who does Jesus give eternal life to in this passage is it the Galileans who were who were hoping Jesus would do a little song and dance for them no that's not genuine faith that's that's making Jesus do what you want no it's it's the royal official!

[42:23] in his household who came to Jesus as the sole object of their faith these were the ones that Jesus was seeking these were the true worshippers in Capernaum and that's who Jesus is seeking today not flatterers those who humble themselves people from every tribe tongue nation having one thing in common Jesus is the sole object of our saving faith it's him we behold it's him we believe and it's him who gives us life in abundance let me pray God in heaven would you impress upon our hearts once again how worthy you are Lord Jesus to be the sole object of our faith and that you as the controlling center of each of us individually and as us as a church that you would get all the praise and glory and honor and fame and majesty that you deserve would you continue to work in our midst would you continue to answer our prayers would you continue to do things that only you can do not for us

Lord not for us but to your name give glory! In Jesus name we pray