

Hearing is Believing

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[0 : 00] Please be seated and if you could keep your Bibles open to John chapter 4 on page 91. We're looking at pages 43 to 54.

We continue with our series on the signs of John's Gospel. Last week we saw Jesus replace the water with the wine at a wedding feast, demonstrating that He is God's Messiah, come to bring purification from sin.

And now we move on to the next sign and as you saw earlier in our geography lesson, we're back in Cana of Galilee and now an official from Capernaum comes, his son is dying of a fever and begs Jesus to heal him, which Jesus does.

He speaks a word and his son is whole. But I must start with something of a confession. There were some major events in the cultural life of the world over the past week, you might have noticed. One, of course, was the publication of the last Harry Potter book, eliciting great excitement. No one has so far divulged the ending. I'm very grateful. But the other great cultural event in our society, which I'm sure you all noticed, was the arrival in America of no less than Victoria Beckham.

[1 : 16] Anybody see that? Otherwise known as Posh Spice, the wife of the footballer David Beckham. And an hour-long show was devoted to her arrival in Los Angeles.

And I'm ashamed to say, I don't know if anyone else saw it here, but I watched Transfixed for an entire hour. As she got her driver's license, as she went to lunch, as she bought a house, and as she had her hair constantly flicked by her own personal hairdresser.

Now, that's a job that you've got to have. That's a job. I mean, what a life. Now, for the life of me, I must say, I don't quite know how or why I sat through the whole thing. Because at the end of the hour, one was no less clued into any insight whatsoever about who this person actually is or what she's about.

The whole thing was so air-sprayed, so insipid, so one-dimensional, and yet so alluring somehow. Her comments on Los Angeles culture were limited, however.

So now, this is my segue into our passage, because in John's Gospel, in these signs, Jesus is presenting himself to us. But far from presenting a sculptured, air-sprayed version of himself, his purpose is to freely and fully reveal himself to us.

[2 : 46] We remember what John has said about these signs. That they have been recorded that we might know and believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that in believing, have life in his name.

He reveals himself to us as God, and as the source of life, eternal life. That is why these seven signs have been recorded for us.

So as we look at these signs, we need to look for what the sign says about who Jesus is, and what he has come to do, and how we relate to him.

If we were to have a test right here this morning, which we're not going to do, I promise, could you very succinctly define who Jesus is, and what his mission is all about?

Think about that. Very succinctly, who is he, and what is his mission? Well, we start our passage today at 43 with something of a contradiction on both of these counts.

[3 : 48] You may notice the contradiction. Look at verse 43, and we see Jesus has come back now. After two days, Jesus departed to Galilee. For Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

So there's that rather dire prediction. We're expecting perhaps confrontation or rejection. But then verse 45, 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 we're expecting confrontation from Jesus' prediction there. And yet, verse 45, they welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in the feast. So what's going on? Well, we know what he had done in Jerusalem, because John tells us, if you turn back one page to John chapter 2 and verse 23, page 89, left column, it says, Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name, when they saw the signs which he did, but Jesus did not trust himself to them. A bit of ominous mood music there. So many of these Galileans and many of the crowd had gone down to Jerusalem. They had seen the signs Jesus did. And so as he returns now to Galilee, comes into Cana, there's this welcome and excitement.

You know, the band is out. The party is on. Jesus is back. And Jesus rebukes them. Look at verse 48. Verse 48 is directed both to the man who comes to him and to the crowd.

[5 : 13] Verse 48, Unless you people, you all, see signs and wonders you will not believe. See, that's what's going on here. Jesus saw into their hearts.

Jesus saw that they welcomed him. But they did not honor him. They welcomed him for the signs he could perform. They're thrilled he's back. The local boy turned miracle worker.

Come, do a sign. Let's see what's going on. But they did not honor him for who he is. Remember, the purpose of the signs. That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ.

The Son of God. And believing have life in his name. See, the signs and miracles of Jesus are meant to point beyond themselves. They tell us who he is. They are demonstrations.

That he is the Lord God Almighty. That he has come to forgive sins. That he has come to bring life. Right at the beginning of his Gospel, John tells us that Jesus is the Lord God Almighty.

[6 : 16] And when he sees him, John the Baptist cries out, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. This is who Jesus is. This is what he has come to do. Oh, these people welcome Jesus.

They do not honor him. They welcome the miracle worker. They want to show. But they do not look beyond the signs. To see who he really is. And what he comes to do.

And that's why he rebukes them. You know, as we start, Jesus' rebuke resonates into the church and into the world today. And it's whenever we lose focus on who Jesus actually is.

Who he has revealed himself to be. And what he came to do. Some churches will place great emphasis on spiritual experience. In which the expectation is, as we gather Sunday by Sunday, that Jesus will show up by his Spirit and move in some kind of tangible power.

In services that are very exciting and highly wrought. Back I remember when I was living in the UK in the mid-90s, the Toronto blessing riveted parts of the world and seemed to sweep through parts of the church, both here and in the UK where I lived at the time.

[7 : 30] Extraordinary reports were heard about things going on in churches and some churches in central London and Oxford where I was. All of a sudden people were lined up around the block to get in. And I'm sure many lives were touched in that time.

And our faith is a relationship with a person. And he fills us with his Spirit. He nourishes us with his Word. And so there is an experiential part of being Christian.

It's not just intellectual proposition. But we want to watch out. There's a tension up in the church.

We want our services to be more exciting, more highly wrought, more impactful.

And if we overemphasize the experiential in our faith and in our church life, we might be welcoming Jesus. But we're losing sight of what he has come to do and who he is.

He is the Lord. He has come to bring eternal life. He's not an amusement arcade. See, we need to honor him for who he is. Others will welcome Jesus as a moral teacher.

[8 : 39] I hear people say it all the time. I don't go to church, but I try to live by Jesus' teaching. I've even heard a Christian leader who described Jesus as our particular spiritual guide. Jesus did teach.

And his teaching is very important. But again, if we reduce Jesus just to being a teacher, then we bring him down to the human level. We make him just like any one of us.

All of us. And we might welcome his teaching. But do we honor him as the Lord God Almighty?

You know, in our own context here as evangelical Christians, we will often talk about accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord. I've been very challenged on this week as I've been preparing.

That summarizes our relationship to him. And it is a wonderful thing. He is our Savior. Do we welcome him as Savior and forget to bow down before him as Lord?

[9 : 39] We receive the love and we love him and that's right and good. But it's in those places in our lives of disobedience that we fail to honor him as the Lord.

Do we receive the salvation? He is also the Lord and he needs to be obeyed. See, Jesus is not just to be welcomed.

He is to be honored for who he is. And that takes me right now to the interaction between the man and Jesus. So that's the crowd. The crowd is interested in signs and wonders.

Okay, now let's focus on the official and his request. Now as we've seen, the official and his son are from Capernaum, so they are distant from Cana where Jesus is. So the man makes this day's journey, verse 47, and comes down and begs Jesus to heal his son who is at the point of death. And now Jesus' words in verse 48, which were a rebuke to the crowd, are directed to him as a test. He says, unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. So is he yet just another person who's looking after, looking for miracles and signs and a show, or is he genuine?

[10 : 53] And the man persists and begs Jesus, please come down, heal my son. And so Jesus says to him, go, your son will live. Now what is this man going to do in response to that?

Will he throw up his hands in disgust? Will he insist that Jesus come and do something? Will he make Jesus wave his magic wand? No. No.

Verse 50, he believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went his way. What a contrast to the crowd. He took Jesus at his word.

He obeyed. He trusted. We're meant to see the contrast with the crowd. They will not believe unless they have a sign. They want to have a Harry Potter moment, a brandishing of magic wands, a flying around in broomsticks.

The father doesn't get that. He just receives the word. Jesus speaks his word to him. And the man responds with trust.

[11 : 56] He trusts that it is true what Jesus has said, that it will be. And he has to trust into the future. He receives no news for an entire day. Now this picture, this interaction of this man with Jesus, that really is a picture of the Christian life.

That is what we need to do. We need to take Jesus at his word. In John 5.23, Jesus says, He who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.

See, that is the point of Jesus' teaching. Jesus' teaching is not primarily that of a great moral teacher or a spiritual guide. He came to earth to die in our place that we might live.

He came to provide forgiveness for our sins. And in his teaching, he reveals himself to us. In his teaching, he tells us what we need to know, what we need to do so that we might have that eternal life.

You see, he is far more important than a spiritual or moral teacher. His life, his word, is life. And we need to take him at his word.

[13 : 11] That is why we have been given the Bible. We need to trust his word to us. And so we have this picture of this man coming before Jesus, not demanding a sign, but receiving a word.

We have Jesus' authority and his submission. Jesus' word and his obedience. We don't demand that he prove himself to us.

We don't demand a sign. We don't reduce him to being a teacher. We bow down before him and we take him at his word. Now we can only do that, I mean, there's only, there's no point in doing that unless Jesus really is something more than a teacher or a magician.

So let's look at the sign itself because he shows us who he is here and what he's doing. He's showing us that he is the life giver. And we're looking here at verse 51 and following.

Because we have some details about the actual healing itself. There are three things you want to notice. The first is that Jesus healed the boy from a distance. The boy was in Capernaum.

[14 : 20] Jesus was in Cana. And it was at his word the boy was healed at a distance. What does that say to us about Jesus' authority?

I mean, the mountains didn't block the signal. It's a bit like having a wireless internet. I don't have wireless internet in my house but my neighbors do. And when they're in town I can access the internet anywhere in my house.

But sometimes the signal gets kind of confused and, you know, cut off and then I can't get the internet. I think sometimes we think it's a bit like that with Jesus. If we don't believe enough, we're not good enough, the signal might get cut off.

And prevent him from working. It's not like that. He speaks and it is. So Jesus healed him from a distance. Second, he was healed at the exact hour that Jesus spoke.

The father was met by the servants and told him his son was healed. He asked when it happened and they gave him the time. Yesterday, the seventh hour. And the man realized it was at the very moment that Jesus spoke to him.

[15:24] Funny, what was this man thinking as he journeyed home? Because it took him a day before he found out. Was he journeying full of faith? Did he question?

Did he doubt? Did he wonder? We don't really know. But it doesn't matter because it isn't dependent upon him. And there's nothing that he could do that could kind of interfere with the frequency.

This is Jesus speaking. And lastly, the healing was instantaneous. The son did not begin to get better but the fever left him completely.

It was a complete restoration to health. Now you see what we are meant to see here in this healing. Heal from a distance at the exact hour he spoke instantaneously.

Who could do that? Who can restore the dying to life? Can a magician do that? Can a wonder worker do that? Can a great teacher do that?

[16:24] Who has the authority over life and death? And of course the point is that only God can do that. We are to be left in no confusion about who Jesus is.

He is God. And He has demonstrated authority over life and death. At His word this boy was returned to health and life.

See this sign demonstrates beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is God. That He is the Son of God and that He has come to bring life. Deuteronomy 32, 39 says there is no God besides Me. I put to death and I bring to life. I have wounded and I will heal. See Jesus holds Himself up before us and we see Him as God Almighty displayed to us quite plainly.

He is God. He is the eternal life giver. He is far and away greater than any teacher no matter how exalted. And Jesus says this of Himself in John 5, 21.

[17:35] He says, For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life so also the Son gives life to whom He will. See that's what He's come to do. He is the Son of God and He is in the very serious business of bringing life.

Remember what we've been told. These signs are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name. And that's what He's about. Not a miracle worker though He performs miracles. Not a religious teacher though He teaches. He is God. He has come to bring forgiveness for our sins.

He is the eternal life giver. So if that is true what do we do then before this God? Well, as I close simply we believe in Him.

We honor Him we take Him at His word and we believe in Him. We accept Him for who He is not for whom we want Him to be.

[18:44] We don't offer a sacrifice we don't sprinkle water on ourselves we believe. See the Father goes back to Capernaum he saw what Jesus had done and in seeing he saw the reality.

Verse 53 and He Himself believed and all His household no fireworks just a word and His Son whole and He sees this must be God He must be God and if He is God then we need to respond to Him.

We need to put our hearts before Him we need to believe in Him yes you are God. Jesus stands before us the eternal Lord the Son of God who came to die that we might live who offers forgiveness of sins who brings eternal life God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him might have eternal life and we believe believe Him and it's when everything else falls away and you behold Jesus for who He is and you say yes you are you have the words of eternal life you are the Lord God you are forgiveness you are eternal life brothers and sisters it's that simple but don't take my word for it

I give the last word to Jesus John chapter 5 24 He says truly truly I say to you he who hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life He says Jesus He says he says he says what did He say this week of His Lord God He says He says for that He says He says