

Healing the Official's Son Believing With All of Your Heart

Is true love deserved, or is it given? Is devotion earned or is it a gift? Don't we want someone to love us for who we are, not because of what we can do for them? What about our love for God? Do we believe in Jesus because of what He can do for us, or does our faith come out of true love for Him? These are not just idle questions. God wants every one of us to grow to a faith that blossoms from love. He wants us to believe with all our heart.

This morning we are going to look at the second miracle of Jesus in John's Gospel. John records seven such miracles, and he calls them signs. They point us to something else. That's what signs do. They point us to something greater than the sign itself. They're signs because they point to who Jesus is. They signify why he came. These are miracles that are more than miracles. And this isn't just the story of a miracle. It isn't just a display of Jesus' supernatural power. It is a story of a growing and deepening faith. And we find this story in John 4:46-54. Let us watch.

(Show Video)

It is a desperate man that comes to Jesus. It is a desperate man with a desperate need. His child is sick and nearing death. Any parent who has every had a sick child knows the feeling of urgency, and when you don't know what's wrong, and you don't know what to do, a sense of fear grips your gut and won't let go. When Alyssa was a baby she developed the most horrendous sounding cough. She hacked and barked like a seal. She wheezed, and sounded like she couldn't breathe. So in the middle of the night we scooped her up and rushed her to the emergency room.

Fortunately, she just had the croup, and it is fairly common. But we were new parents and had never heard of it, and for a short time we feared something was seriously wrong with our baby. But what do you do when you've been to the ER and there's nothing the doctor's can do? What do you do when you've tried all of the medicines, and none of them work?

That's the situation this royal official is in. As one of Herod's leading officials he would have the wealth and connections to get his son the best money could buy. But none of the doctors could help. None of the herbal mixtures or potions worked, and his son neared death's door.

A desperate person will try anything. I've know of sick people who after exhausting all of our medical knowledge and technology, went to Mexico to try questionable, unproven, experimental treatments. A friend of mine in Virginia was diagnosed with cancer in his throat,

tongue and the base of his brain. His only option was to try an experimental regimen of treatments that had never been tried before. He was told he could die. He was told he may never talk again. But it was his only hope.

It was this sort of thin thread of hope that lead this official on a twenty mile journey from Capernaum to find Jesus in Cana. Just like with so many of us, desperation drives him to Jesus. This man's hope was realized in way that he never imagined. Jesus not only heals his son, but He heals him at a distance of some twenty miles. But there is to the miracle. Jesus not only heals the boy's body, but he heals the father's heart. The man comes to Jesus with only the most basic, elementary level of faith. By the end of the story, he and his whole family come to full, wholehearted, life-changing faith in Jesus.

I. A Faith by Sight *Believing with your eyes*

Imagine faith as a ladder with different rungs. Faith begins at a most basic level. It believes what it sees with its eyes. "I believe what you did for me." When this official first approaches Jesus we see faith at this most basic level. It is believing with your eyes. It needs some visual evidence, some tangible proof. "If I see it, I will believe it." This is where faith begins for many of us. "If you answer this prayer... If you open this door... If you provide this need, then I will believe." In our desperation, we turn to God with a weak, trembling faith looking for anything to hold on to, and God in his grace often responds to this weak faith. He meets us at our level of need.

This is where the royal official begins. He begs Jesus to come and heal his son. It is a weak faith. It is an imperfect faith. He doesn't even understand who Jesus is at this point. The official doesn't have much to go on. He had heard about Jesus changing to water to wine. It was a fantastic story. He didn't believe it at first. But he knew several people who were at the wedding. Could it possibly be true? People had seen Jesus say and do some amazing things during the Passover in Jerusalem. Some said he was a great prophet. Others said he was a miracle worker. If Jesus was willing to save a couple's wedding, then maybe he could do something to save his son.

We see here that even a little faith can make a big difference. This official was willing to act on just a little evidence. I'm sure he loaded with questions and filled with doubt as he headed from to Cana to find Jesus. But he was willing to act on the evidence he did have. It wasn't full faith. It wasn't complete trust, but he was willing to take a step.

Many think that since they have only a little faith, Jesus can't really make a difference in their life. But he can. It doesn't take a perfect faith. Even a small step based on a weak faith can be life-changing. But you have to act on it. You have to go to Jesus.

What are you willing to do? Are you willing to act on the evidence you do have? Or are you waiting for every question, every doubt, every concern to be answered? If this royal official had waited for that moment, it never would have happened. His son never would have been healed. He would never know who Jesus was. But Jesus rewards a little faith with more. Go to Jesus based on what you have seen. Ask and He will answer. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened.

Going to Jesus is not always easy. It takes steps on our part. It was a twenty mile journey from Capernaum to Cana. That is a long journey on foot. On horseback it is still a day's ride through rugged terrain.

Are you at this beginning stage of faith? You want to believe, but you want some sort of proof? You want to see it with your own eyes? What are you willing to do? It could be as simple as going to God in prayer. It might mean spending some time reading your Bible. It might mean talking to someone in the church here. It might mean going to Sunday School. It might mean doing what God has been laying on your heart to do. But you have take a step. It has to begin somewhere. And if you take a step, even a little one, Jesus will reward it.

The official also had to swallow his pride. Here is an important official going to a peasant carpenter. Jesus cannot meet our need while we are hanging onto our self-importance. We may say, "I don't need Jesus because of my education, wealth, career, etc." We can't let our success, accomplishment, status and position keep us from going to Jesus. No amount of success or achievement can exempt you from trouble, but often our status keeps us from turning to Jesus in our need. We think we can manage it on our own. Is there anything that is keeping you from turning to Jesus?

II. A Faith by Word *Believing with your head*

A faith that goes by sight is just the first level of faith. It is the first rung in the ladder. But God never wants us to stay at that level. He wants us to move on. Sadly, many people know only how to deal with God on this first level. They believe only with their eyes. Answer this prayer, get me out of this jam, give me this thing, then I will believe. But God wants us to move beyond this level. We need to believe because of who He is, not just what he does.

A faith that remains only at this first level does not fully honor God because it dictates terms to God. It means that God must serve us rather than us serve Him. It says I'll follow you as long as you keep delivering the goods. It sees God as a cosmic vending machine. It is a love based only on what we get out of it.

Sight-based faith has its place as a starting point, but we must move on from there. Sadly, many never do. They keep wanting God to perform one thing after another for them to keep believing, much like the Israelites of the Exodus. God is not like a dog who does trick for the treats of our token faith. We must move beyond loving God for what he does for us to loving God himself.

In our text in John 4 we see Jesus stretch and grow the official's faith. He comes based on the miracle he has heard about. He comes seeking another miracle. When the official first approaches with his need, Jesus laments "*Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe.*"

This isn't the response the official was hoping for. I wish we could hear Jesus' tone and see the expression on his face and the look in his eyes. But I don't imagine Jesus spoke them as words of condemnation or rebuke. I hear in these words Jesus' desire for something more. He wants a greater faith, a faith that doesn't depend on what it can see.

So Jesus begins to stretch the official's faith. He dares him to trust just a little bit more. The man desperately wants Jesus to come before his child dies. Jesus understands his pain and fear, but he also wants to develop his faith. So Jesus gives him a promise, "You may go, your son will live."

This is not what the official asked for. As far as he can tell Jesus hasn't done a thing. He has no proof. There is no evidence. He now has a simple choice. He can take Jesus at his word, or he can give up his last hope for his son. He came seeking a sign, but he was not given a sign only a word. What will he do?

John tells us, "*the man took Jesus at his word and departed.*" He has just moved to a higher level of faith. He is not depending on visual proof. He is believing Jesus simply at his word. This level of faith believes him because it knows his word is true. Jesus said it and he does it. His faith may have been ignorant and insufficient, but Jesus doesn't turn him away, rather he grows him beyond where he is. He no longer only believes with his eyes. He believes with his head.

III. A Faith of Love *Believing with your heart*

His faith was much greater, but it was still not full-fledged faith. Many people get stuck at this point. They never move beyond this second rung. They believe God's word is true. They even try to do what it says. But there is no passionate love for God. There is no intimacy with their Savior. For them faith is just following a list of rules and regulations. God never intended faith to be like this. He wants not merely our obedience. He longs for our love and companionship. For that we have to move on from this second rung to the third. It is a faith of love. It is believing with all your heart. It is believing in Jesus not only for what he does, or what he says, but simply for who he is. It trusts him simply because of who he is.

By the time this royal official reaches home, his faith has moved to this level. I can imagine the official as he hurried home. Hope has filled his heart. But there is still that nagging question in the back of his mind. "Will there finally be some good news?" he wonders.

In the distance he sees some people approaching. He recognizes their servants. They are traveling at a quickened pace. They bring news. It must either be really good or really bad for them to travel this far. "Your son is alive. He's up and about. He's taking food again, and he wants to play. You won't believe it." And here is where we see the royal official make the final step in verse 52-53,

When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, 'The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour.' Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' So he and all his household believed.

We need to give the official credit. He had the intelligence to recognize what Jesus had done for him. He could have forgotten. He could have thought, "Boy, that was a close one. We are sure lucky." So often in life we go to Jesus in our need, but in our blessing we often forget him. We need to recognize Jesus' hand on our life. Too often we take the credit for the good things, and blame God for the bad things.

At this third stage, the official believes simply because of who Jesus is. He doesn't need a visible sign. He doesn't need an assuring word. As John tells us in our text he simply "believed."

Conclusion

Where are you at in your journey? Maybe you're here this morning and you don't believe, but you have a desperate need in your life. You don't know where to turn. You've tried so many things and they don't work. Look to Jesus. Take a step, even if it's a small one, and see

what he can do. Maybe you're there on the boundaries of belief. You're just at the beginning stages. You've seen what Jesus can do, and you're interested, but you still have a lot of doubts and questions. That's okay. He can work even with a small faith, but be willing to take another step of faith. Be willing to take Jesus at his word. Read your Bible, Talk to someone here, have someone pray with you.

Maybe you've been in the church awhile. You try to live a good life, but faith for you is just trying to live your life according to the right rules. That's not what it's about. It's about having a relationship with God. It's about loving Jesus for who he is. If that's what you want, we invite you to do that this morning.