

# Jesus Heals the Royal Official's Son

John 4:43-54

*Warm-up Question: Can you think of someone who always gives you a warm welcome when you see them? What do they do that always makes you feel good?*

<sup>43</sup> After the two days he left for Galilee. <sup>44</sup> (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) <sup>45</sup> When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there. <sup>46</sup> Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. <sup>47</sup> When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. <sup>48</sup> "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." <sup>49</sup> The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." <sup>50</sup> Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed. <sup>51</sup> While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. <sup>52</sup> 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." <sup>53</sup> 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. <sup>54</sup> This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee (John 4:43-54).

## **No Honor in One's Home Town**

In our last study about the Samaritan woman, we are told that Jesus stayed two whole days in Samaritan territory ministering to the people of Sychar. When He left He continued north. When He arrived in Galilee, we are told that the Galileans welcomed Him. We have to ask why John mentions that Jesus had said that a prophet has no honor in his own country, but then tells us that the Galileans welcomed Him. This seems to be a contradiction. Some would say that John is referring to the fact that the Jews of Jerusalem did not welcome Him, even though He was born in Bethlehem of Judah, a close walk south from Jerusalem. John had already written that Jesus had stirred up a hornet's nest in Jerusalem by clearing out the temple with a whip of cords (John 2:15-16), so the religious leaders there were certainly

not honoring Him. At a very young age, Jesus' parents moved to Nazareth from Egypt, where they were hiding Him until King Herod died (Matthew 2:19-20), so it seems likely that He was referring perhaps to the city of Nazareth itself, Nazareth being the next northern city He would have passed through from Sychar of Samaria to Cana of Galilee. Luke testifies that after Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, He went north to Nazareth, omitting the stop in Sychar. It was here that Jesus gave His reading from the scroll of Isaiah, saying that the Spirit of the Lord was on Him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind. He read a passage that everyone understood to be speaking of the Messiah, and finished it by saying that "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:16-21). Luke testifies that it was here in his own town that Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his own home town" (Luke 4:24). Nazareth's response was to take Him to the brow of a hill and try to throw him down the cliff (Luke 4:29)!

*Why doesn't a prophet have honor in his own home town? Why do you think he was not appreciated there? Do you think that a man or woman of God can be stifled in his or her home town from accomplishing and being all that God wants for him/her?*

When the Spirit of God comes upon us, we are given power from on high (Acts 1:8), and have huge potential to do the works of God as we step out in faith and believe God's Word. You, if you are a Christian, have been made sons and daughters of the Living God, through the blood of Christ. The Bible says: You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26). God "gifts" us with huge potential because of being in covenant relationship with Him, and our gift back to Him is what we do with that potential (Matthew 11:11-12). There are those, especially from our own home town, that would place limits on the potential that we have been given in Christ. To them, you are only the fisherman's son, or the mechanic, or waitress, or however you are viewed by those who know you in your

own home town. The scriptures tell us that when we are born again, all things are new!

<sup>16</sup> So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:16-17)!

That means we have all kinds of possibilities ahead of us, and the past is dead to us. *The old has gone, the new has come.* However, others do not forgive in the way God forgives us and all of our old traits and actions, both good and bad, are long remembered by some of the people who know us best. This can create a mental picture in their mind of who we are, and it can be hard for us to break free from that. We need to cling to what the Word of God says about us and believe His Words about us rather than believe the same old image that is presented to us, or believe the lies that the enemy of our souls tells us. His Word, our “mental food” is what we need to feed on in order to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, into all that God can help us to be and to achieve through His Spirit who is at work within us. We will always come across people who will place limits on what you can do, but we are told by scripture that:

I can do everything through him who gives me strength (Philippians 4:13).

Your home towns have many people who have influenced you as you grew up. They are still able to influence you by their words if you listen to them. Words such as, “He’ll never amount to anything,” “he’s always been that way,” or maybe they would say, “he couldn’t even graduate, let alone do.....you name it!” People affect us with their words. The only response is to remind one’s self of God’s Word,

He replied, “Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. **Nothing will be impossible for you**” (Matthew 17:20 Emphasis mine).

The only limits that hinder us from soaring in Him are the limits of our own minds. Let’s use the example of the four minute mile:

“Remember the four minute mile? People had been trying to achieve it since the days of the ancient Greeks. In fact, folklore has it that the Greeks had lions chase the runners, thinking that it would make them run faster. They also tried drinking tiger’s milk, \*(their equivalent of steroids.)—not the stuff you get down at the health food store, but the real thing (\*yes, real milk from real tigers. Imagine trying to “milk a tiger”! I would think that the fact that someone could actually milk a tiger should really give them a claim to fame, aside from any athletic accomplishment!) But to their great disappointment, nothing they tried worked. The four minute mile was not reached. So they decided that it was impossible for a person to run a mile in four minutes or less. And for a thousand years everyone believed it. Our bone structure is all wrong. Wind resistance is too great. We have inadequate lung power. There were a million reasons. Then one man, one single human being, proved that the doctors, the trainers, the athletes, and the millions of runners before him, who tried and failed, were all wrong. And, miracle of miracles, the year after Roger Bannister broke the four minute mile, thirty seven other runners broke the four minute mile. The year after that three hundred runners broke the four minute mile. And a few years ago in a single race in New York, thirteen out of thirteen runners broke the four minute mile. In other words, a few decades ago the runner who finished dead last in the New York race would have been regarded as having accomplished the impossible.

What happened? There were no great breakthroughs in training. No one discovered how to control wind resistance. Human bone structure and physiology didn’t suddenly improve. But human attitudes did.”<sup>1</sup>

Don’t allow others or even your own mind, to place barriers that would hinder you from becoming all that you can be in God. The scripture says, “We can do all things according to the power that works in us” (Colossians 1:29). Break free from the home town attitude!

*What words have hurt you in the past that you still recall too easily?*

### **The Faith of a Royal Official**

John the apostle, in the passage we are studying, does not even mention the fact that Jesus visited Nazareth, he just tells us the reason why He doesn’t stay, mentioning that He had no honor in His own country. John writes that He went on to Cana in Galilee, a few miles further north. He was greatly welcomed by the people

<sup>1</sup> Developing the Leader Within You, by John Maxwell, Nelson Publishers, Page 95. \* authors comments.

of Cana. This was the home town of Nathanael (John 21:2), where it is likely they stayed the night. Here is also where the water was made into wine, which was the first miraculous sign that Jesus had performed (John 2:11). John also tells us that another reason they welcomed Him was because they saw all He had done at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there (verse 45). So what went on at the Passover Feast that so filled them with pride that Jesus was a Galilean? John has already told us of the instance when Jesus pushed over the money tables in the temple courts and the use of the whip against the money changers. The other thing that John mentions as happening in Jerusalem was the miracles He had performed:

<sup>23</sup> Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name (John 2:23).

Don't you think that when the Galileans of Capernaum came home from the Feast of Passover there was a buzz of excitement at what Jesus had done? The royal official who lived in Capernaum had full expectation that Jesus could make him well because he had heard all the stories of the miraculous signs in Jerusalem. The Greek word translated "royal official" is *basilikos*, meaning "kings man." This is a person of high rank, a man that is one of Herod's trusted officials. His rank means nothing now though—he was a man in need of his son's healing. As he saw his son's health declining, desperation, hope and faith in God began to rise when he heard of the works of Jesus, the miracles that He had been doing.

*What stories of lives being changed, prayers heard, healing testimonies, have you heard that have influenced and encouraged you? Briefly share some of them with each other.*

### **The Royal Official has Four Growth Spurts to his Faith**

1) **He believed enough to travel 19 miles to see Jesus.** There is something about this royal official that is wonderful to consider. First of all, he did not leave the parenting to his wife, he went himself. He could easily have justified sending a servant to ask Jesus to come to his son, after all, he was probably very busy in his official role. We are told that he lived in Capernaum on the edge of the Sea of Galilee with his son. This made his travel distance around nineteen miles. If you would

like to see a map of the area, you can set your browser to go to the following web address: <http://bibleatlas.org/full/cana.htm>

It was quite a gamble he was taking because he could have used his time to go to see the doctor. Instead he placed his faith in Christ and decided that if he went himself, he would plead with Jesus to travel the nineteen miles to Capernaum to lay His hands on his son. The five hour walk to Cana, I'm sure, was a time of brokenness and heartache at the thought of losing his son. Had he made the right choice? What if Jesus was too busy? Can He do the things that they say He can do? Do I have enough time to go this far and for Jesus to get back in time? One wonders if the boy was already in a coma when the father left. It seems that the official was sure his boy was dying.

2) **He begs Jesus for His help.** The words *begged him to come*, in verse 47, is in the imperfect tense, so it should be paraphrased that he kept on begging Him over and over again. This man would not let up; He put all of his hope in Jesus, gambling that Jesus would agree to come to his home and pray for his son. He knew that his son was close to death (verse 47), and it was just a matter of time. He pled out of urgency and desperation.

Perhaps now is a good time to say the things to a loved one that you always meant to say but haven't so far. Perhaps now is a good time to do the things that you always said you would do together. We all like to think that we have time, but life doesn't always turn out the way we expect. Don't put off till tomorrow what you can do today. Saying words such as, "I love you," are very hard for some people. I'm sure the man spent the five hour journey walking as fast as he could and I'm sure it was a time of prayer for him too. The very thought of losing his son was unbearable. This was a man who cared deeply, and he would do anything for his son to be better. Wouldn't you?

Jesus' reply seems quite harsh until we learn that the words below were directed not only to him, but to the crowd as well. It seems that it had almost become like a circus of people looking for the next sensational act of the Lord. The royal official came, more than likely, still in his official garb, hopefully to add even more weight to his request for Jesus to come to pray for his son. This man, dressed in his official garb, who also looked quite desperate, drew even more of a crowd who wanted to

see what was happening. Jesus knew human nature, and human motives. Jesus wanted to take him further on in his faith walk. He wanted him to believe without seeing.

<sup>48</sup> “Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, “you will never believe” (verse 48).

It seems from the above words that the Lord is looking for men and women to believe and trust Him even when they don't see the miraculous works of God. “Blessed are those who do not see yet believe,” he told Thomas after He showed him His hands and feet and side (John 20:29). Jesus longs for His people to trust Him and step out on His word even if they do not see any evidence for believing:

<sup>22</sup> “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. <sup>23</sup> “I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ **and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen**, it will be done for him. <sup>24</sup> Therefore I tell you, **whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours** (Mark 11:22-24).

*Why does God want us to believe before we see?*

**3) He believed Jesus' word that his son would live.** Jesus said to the man: “You may go, your son will live” (verse 53). If it had been me, I would have said, “What, no sign! No prayer! What was this? That's not the way it's supposed to happen! How can I know that what you say is true? Are you saying that I am just supposed to believe that the work of healing has been done without you coming and laying hands on him?”

I'm sure there were many questions in the man's heart but he did not give vent to them. We are told that he took Jesus at His word and departed.

Sometimes God will offend the mind to reveal our hearts. Take, for instance, the story of Naaman. Naaman was a great man and commander of the army of Aram. He had contracted leprosy and sought healing from the great Israelite prophet Elisha:

<sup>9</sup> So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. <sup>10</sup> Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, “Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you

will be cleansed.” <sup>11</sup> But Naaman went away angry and said, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. <sup>12</sup> Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?” So he turned and went off in a rage. <sup>13</sup> Naaman's servants went to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed’!” <sup>14</sup> So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy (2 Kings 5:9-14).

God sure could have had him dip himself in the rivers of Damascus. But Naaman had limits that were placed on his faith. He thought that Elisha would come out of his house and wave his hand over the leprosy and that would be it, the healing would take place. God offended his mind to reveal his heart. First of all, Elisha did not even come out of his house to talk to him, he had his servant give Naaman a message. He had to humble himself to dip in the Jordan's muddied water. He nearly missed receiving his healing because of his pride. Sometimes God chooses to test our obedience by telling us to do something that seems stupid. I well remember hearing a fellow pastor tell of the time his church was visited by God in Colchester, Essex, England. Two very young Christians had just listened to a time of teaching about healing. One had terrible backache and the other had a tingling sensation in the bottom of her feet, which she interpreted as God wanting her to heal her friend by standing on her back! They both went for it, and guess what, God totally healed the backache! An act of obedience and God moved in a wonderful way. I don't think that is something for us to practice, this act of faith was a one time act of God honoring faith, just like Naaman bathing seven times in the river Jordan. God chooses sometimes to offend the mind to reveal and test the heart. The royal official chose to believe the word of Jesus. He departed and had peace about it.

We are told that he didn't get home until the next day. What happened? Perhaps he was so confident in his faith that he stayed the rest of the afternoon. The miracle, he found out when he got home, happened at the seventh hour of the day before (verse 52), exactly at the time Jesus had said, “Your son will live” (verse 53). The seventh hour would have been one o'clock in the afternoon, plenty of time for him to walk the five

hour journey home, but for some reason he didn't return home until the next day. I'd like to ask him about it when I meet him!

4) **He and his whole household believed.** When he got home and saw his family, how much joy would have flooded his soul? No wonder his whole household believed when they found out that the very time Jesus told him to go, and that his son would live, was the very time his son was healed. This miracle touched many lives, not just his son's life. It's interesting to note that later on, Jesus had two people that supported Jesus out of their private means, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod Antipas' steward (Luke 8:1-3). King Herod Antipas had his residence in Capernaum. Perhaps it was the same family. We can't be sure, but it is logical to assume that the family was so touched that

they wanted to support the ministry of Jesus. We just never know how a good deed will come back to bless us (Ecclesiastes 11:1).

Perhaps you would like to close with a question and prayer:

*What limits do you think others or yourself have placed on your faith? Has it come from your home town? Has it come from your own self image that you need to shake yourself free from? Has God asked you to do something that has offended your mind like Naaman? Discuss and pray together afterwards.*

Prayer: Father, help me to open my mind and heart to all that You have prepared for me. Keep me from setting limits on myself, or setting limits on others.

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