

The Gospel of John – Session 6

Last session we covered John the Baptist acknowledging that he was not the Christ, and his pointing out that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Messiah. “he must increase but I must decrease” his famous words. This is the last time we will hear anything from John the Baptist in John’s Gospel.

We also covered John 4 – the story of Jesus encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, where she comes to faith and then becomes an evangelist by going to her village and bearing witness to Jesus. The new order of God is breaking in, neither Mt. Gerazim nor Jerusalem will be the proper site for the worship of God. The true focal point of worship will be Jesus, who has come from God to save our souls through **belief** that Jesus is the Christ. We can be assured that belief in Jesus is the criteria for entering into the Kingdom of God for all eternity. John notes that “many Samaritans came to believe” because of her testimony. That is the mission of the Church, to bear witness so that people can come to a saving faith in Jesus, the Christ.

So today, we pick it up with John 4:43 – Jesus gets through Samaria safely, and reaches Cana in Galilee, in the north. Cana is where Jesus had performed his first miracle, the changing of water into wine at the wedding feast.

In vs. 44 – Jesus testifies that a prophet is often not honored in his own country.

In Vs. 45 – The Galileans, gentiles not Jews, welcome him openly. So not it is becoming clear in John’s Gospel, the new order is breaking into human and salvation history. A Samaritan woman has come to faith, and her testimony has led other Samaritans from her village to come to faith. And now, Galileans have welcomed him. His own people, the Jews in Judea, have not accepted him, but the Galileans have.

We pick it up with the second sign of John’s Gospel, the 2nd of the 7 signs, the perfect Jewish number. The second sign is the healing of the nobleman’s son. He likely was a man of royal blood, or a house member of royalty. He may be part of the family of Herod, who was tetrarch of Galilee in the north. His son is ill and he seeks Jesus out (vs. 47).

In Vs. 48 – the “you” that Jesus uses is plural. Jesus is speaking not only to the nobleman but to all. “unless you (plural) see signs and wonders, you will not believe. So Jesus is talking to all people, Gentiles and Jews.

In Vs. 49 – The man persists – “Sir, come down before my son dies” The word used translated “sir”, Kyrios, means Lord. (we say the Kyrie eleison – Lord have mercy) By using the word Kyrie, it shows this man already had acknowledge who Jesus is, Lord. He has faith.

In Vs. 50 – Jesus does not go with him. He doesn’t need to and he wants to make a point about this. He doesn’t need to because he can merely speak the word to honor the nobleman and heal his son. “Go, your son will live”.

John tells us: “the man believed the word” that Jesus spoke to him. Again, Jesus, Incarnate “Word”, merely speaks His holy and life giving word and His holy purposes are accomplished.

Vs. 53-53 - say "as he was going down" - just a footnote about geography. Cana, where this encounter took place is in the foothills of Galilee. Capernaum, where the nobleman came from, was by the Sea. The journey from Cana to Capernaum would be about 20 miles, a 2 day trip. Vs. 53's dialogue reveals that when the servants come to meet the nobleman to tell him that the miracle had been accomplished and his son was healed, he is in the 2nd day of his journey home. They tell him that his son is alive. The nobleman asks them at what time was he made well. They reply about the 7th hour (perfect number again) or 1 PM. This news confirmed for the man that it was the very hour when Jesus said the words: Go your son will live.

John then tells us: "the man and his whole household believe"

In Vs. 54 – John tells us that this was the second sign that Jesus did.

Just a couple of observations – Vs. 48 & 49 – The man begged Jesus to come down to Capernaum to heal his son. But again, there is no need to do so. God merely speaks the word. The man who begged for healing, believed. This is what is happening historically. The Gentiles are quick to ask for God to intervene and to believe God at His word. The man trusts in the power of the word. God speaks, and his will is achieved. And then, after the healing is accomplished he and all his whole household "believe". For the man, the sign of his son's healing, signified who Jesus is, the Messiah. A sign signifies a deeper reality. We can rejoice that an ill son was healed, but the true glory is that this act of healing signifies who Jesus truly is.

Next week we will start a path through chapters 5-10, which deal with Jesus and the principal feasts of the Jews. These chapters will begin to reveal to us the heightened tensions between Jesus and his own people the Jews.

The Samaritan woman at the well, the feast at Cana, the curing of the nobleman's son – all stories that make it clear that God's love is intended for all people, not just the chosen people of Israel. All people are within the saving embrace of God's love. This new order will not sit well with God's chosen people. They will see the addition of the Gentiles as a curse not a blessing. They will not be rejoicing that the Gentiles are now insiders.

This is kind of similar to the dynamics of small churches that start to grow. Not everyone wants to see their church grow and welcome new people. Church growth upsets some in the status quo. My hope is that St. Bede's will face the issue of growth, and rejoice over each person, each family that blesses us with their presence.

Next Sunday we come to the story of Jesus healing the lame man at the pool of Bethzatha.