

Living Life Alive – Faith That Makes a Difference
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Scripture Reading:

John 4:43-54

43 After the two days he left for Galilee. 44 (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) 45 When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there. 46 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. 47 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. 48 “Unless you people see signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, “you will never believe.” 49 The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” 50 “Go,” Jesus replied, “your son will live.” The man took Jesus at his word and departed. 51 While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. 52 When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, “Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him.” 53 Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and his whole household believed. 54 This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

How is your soul? How are you? Fine? I have been hearing from people whose souls are fine that they are in workplaces with people who are not fine. Anxiety is high, with some people reaching the end of their rope.

September, this year like none other any of us have experienced, has a huge question mark on it for provincial governments, school boards, teachers, parents and students. There are those concerned about parents and grandparents isolated from family. Some are anxiously waiting for jobs to rematerialize. Some of these stresses were added on top of the uphill climb some of you were already facing.

The Parkview Staff and Elders have been praying for you. We invite you to let us know of specific situations we can pray about. Email or call the office.

Earlier we heard the testimony of King David from Psalm 62. In the opening words of that Psalm He said . . .

Psalm 62:1, 2

1 . . . my soul finds rest in God; . . . 2 . . . he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

What would it look like for us to have a faith in God that really makes a difference? To live in the place where we know our lives are sheltered in an impregnable fortress, and we know we will never be shaken in that safe place?

And the first question for us, is “how do we get ourselves into that place of shelter and refuge that David talked about?” David’s temptation to anxiety must have been great. He was not only concerned about His own protection from enemies and the safety of his family, but how do you protect a nation of people you love?

If you have a Bible available – open it up to the gospel of John, and chapter 4. The verses we are considering start in v. 43 and go to the end of the chapter.

In the Word today we are looking into a healing miracle that Jesus did for a father in deep anguish over his son’s serious sickness. At the end of the verses that were read, in v. 54, John, the gospel writer said that . . .

John 4:54

⁵⁴ This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

In chapter two we read about the miracle Jesus did that John calls the first miraculous sign. That was when Jesus made wine from water at a wedding feast. It is interesting that both of these numbered Galilean miracles took place in the same town, Cana.

There were some similarities to these two miracles and John seemed to want his readers to link them together. Even as he tells that Jesus went to Cana again, he reminds us that Cana was the place of the previous miracle . . .

John 4:46

⁴⁶ Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine.

Though the accounts of John chapter 2 and John chapter 4 are about very different needs with very different miraculous provisions, they tell once and then reinforce a second time the same story of faith in God. A difference making faith in the God who is able to do all things, the God who loves people and showers His goodness into the lives of those who trust Him.

They went to Jesus with their need

The first part of the faith story of the royal official is that he brought his need to Jesus to seek His help. Look at verses 46 and 47 . . .

John 4:46-47

⁴⁶ 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. ⁴⁷ 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.

Jesus was in Cana, the royal official in Capernaum. That was about a 30 km. walk. And it appeared the man did walk, as we find out he was still on the journey home the next day when his servants met him on the road.

That was quite a step to leave his son behind and walk all the way to Cana. Can you imagine what he must have been thinking as he put one foot in front of the other, hour after hour?

“What am I doing?” “Can this man really heal people, even people as sick as my son?” “Will I get a chance to talk to him?” “Will he reject me?” “What if he won’t come back with me to heal my

son?" "I'm probably going to be a day's journey away and my son is going to die without me there with him."

Yet, the man walked on, and the text tells us that when arrived he was passed the point of caring about his image, it says he begged Jesus to go to Capernaum with him. He brought his need to Jesus.

In the first miracle at Cana - Why would Mary, Jesus' mother, think to ask her son to solve the problem of a wine shortage at a wedding? It may seem a highly unusual request to us. But she brought the need to Jesus.

Jesus has invited us to ask God the Father for what we need, for our provision. He told us this with open ended promises . . .

Matthew 7:7-8

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

Mark 11:24

24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Jesus told us that we have a Father in heaven who is better than any earthly Father. He only gives good gifts.

Faith that makes a difference starts with bringing our need to Jesus.

The sincerity of their faith was tested

In each of these faith stories we find that Jesus probed their request to see what kind of faith they had in Him. Jesus' first recorded response to the man's pleading for the life of his son was this . . .

John 4:48

48 "Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

The words were not directed at the official alone, but to him and all the crowd around. He pointed to their motives and asked if they just wanted to see something amazing or did they really want to place their faith in him? How many supernatural miracles would it take to have them believe?

Jesus' mother Mary received a similar faith probing when Jesus questioned her about why she wanted to involve Him in a wine shortage problem.

When the Lord Jesus taught about prayer and bringing our needs to God, He said the amount of faith needed to go to God with was just small, like a a little seed, but a little seed that bears lots of potential. But the faith must be sincere.

We should not be surprised when God lets us wrestle with all the questions the official probably asked himself on his journey. And when we finally come to bending down on our knees to do our own asking, maybe begging, we may well find Jesus looking at the sincerity of our hearts and our faith before He speaks His answer.

They trusted Him

The official pressed on with another plea. In verse 49, he said . . .

John 4:49

⁴⁹ . . . ***“Sir, come down before my child dies.”***

Really, I admire this man’s faith to try again with his request. Yes, he had walked a long way and had already given up much to bring his request to Jesus, but when the favorable answer was not given, he pressed on.

That’s when Jesus said . . .

John 4:50

⁵⁰ ***“Go,” . . . “your son will live.”***

This was the moment of truth. This was the moment of decision. He was to go all the way back to Capernaum without evidence of healing for His son. If he pleaded again that Jesus go with him, it would show he didn’t believe Him. But to turn and leave Jesus behind was to spend another day wrestling with his faith and with his doubts.

He was forced to make the difficult choice between insisting on evidence and thus showing disbelief and of exercising faith without any tangible proof to encourage him. He had to believe without the benefit of seeing.

Remember the disciple Thomas? He said He couldn’t believe Jesus had risen from the dead until he saw it with his own eyes. Jesus, in his love for Thomas granted him that request and told him . . .

John 20:29

²⁹ . . . ***“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”***

Mary’s words of trust were to tell the wedding servants, just do whatever Jesus tells you to do.

They received amazing blessings

The asking and trusting by the royal official was rewarded with amazing blessing when his servants came to him with the good news that his son had made a miraculous recovery at the same time Jesus had spoken the direction for him to go the day before. His son was not only alive, he was well.

Mary, and the wedding planner and the groom and all the guests of the wedding in Cana received about 570 litres of fine wine, the best wine. How much did Jesus supply? It would take a table about 1 meter wide by 5 meters long, packed with wine bottles, to hold the blessing.

In both cases at the moment of believing Jesus, neither the official nor Mary knew what the answer to their request would look like, or how long it would take. And that is real faith in the God who can do anything, and who loves people and showers his goodness into the lives of those who trust Him.

You bring your request to the Lord and you let Him answer how and when He would like to. Let Him provide the best answer.

The provision resulted in more faith

In both these faith stories, others saw what God had done for a person of faith and it led to faith growing in their lives. In our text today, we are told that the whole household of the official came to the place of believing in Jesus. When the disciples saw the miracle of the wine, which was brought on by the faith of Mary, they put their faith in the Lord.

It is a powerful testimony and witness to others when they see and hear of how faith has made a difference in someone else's life.

Through John's gospel record we find two parts of the stories that belong to the person of faith. 1. They went to Jesus with their need, and 2. They trusted Him.

That is where it comes to us today. That is how we get to the place of a faith that make a difference.

What is your need today? . . .

Living life alive is living with faith that makes a difference.

(Prayer of response)

Benediction Scripture:

Psalm 62:11-12, 8

¹¹ . . . "Power belongs to you, God, ¹² and with you, Lord, is unfailing love"; . . .

⁸ Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.