

Uncommon Faith

That You May Believe, John 4:43-54

Introduction

- Ill: A man fell off a cliff, but managed to grab a tree limb on the way down. The following conversation ensued:
 - "Is anyone up there?"
 - "I am here. I am the Lord. Do you believe me?"
 - "Yes, Lord, I believe. I really believe, but I can't hang on much longer."
 - "That's all right, if you really believe you have nothing to worry about. I will save you. Just let go of the branch."
 - A moment of pause, then: "Is anyone else up there? (What a test!)"
- The 4th chapter of Jn. contains the story of man w/ uncommon faith (*read passage*)
 - Jesus arrived in Galilee after spending 2 extra days in Samaria.
 - Even though he received a warm welcome in Galilee, he knew there was more going on below the surface. (1:11, 2:24)
 - Jesus was from Galilee and he knew that "a prophet had no honor in his own country." In other words, once a hometown boy, always a hometown boy – never an expert or a person of authority.
 - The response of the official stands out in comparison to his fellow Galileans.
- This story paints 2 very different pictures of faith in Jesus Christ.
 - These 2 approaches to faith can be summed up in 2 different statements.
 - As we dig deeper into this passage, I want you to evaluate your faith in light of the Bible's teaching on faith.
 - I also want you to notice that the royal official is not lifted up as an exception, but the rule. His uncommon faith is the kind of faith we must all aspire to.

Body

I. "I'LL BELIEVE IT WHEN I SEE IT" (4:43-48).

- A. The Jews in Galilee had heard all about Jesus signs and wonders.
 - 1. They had heard how he turned water into wine (2:1-12).
 - 2. They saw the signs he did in Jerusalem during the Passover feast. (4:45)
- B. The royal official had also heard about Jesus and he was desperate.
 - 1. He probably served at the pleasure of Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great who married his half-brother's wife, Herodias.
 - 2. As a representative of the state, he had a certain level of power & authority, but he was powerless to save his own son from death.
- C. Jesus confronted the royal official & condemned this approach to faith.
 - 1. Jesus performed plenty of signs during his ministry, but for a specific purpose – that people would believe in him and experience eternal life (20:30-31)
 - 2. The Galileans saw Jesus as a wonder-worker, a cure-all magician who had to prove himself.
 - a. God doesn't have to prove himself to any of us.
 - b. He has chosen, in his grace, to reveal himself to us.
 - c. When we demand a sign from God before we will believe, we place ourselves in authority over God.

II. "I'LL BELIEVE IT BECAUSE HE SAID IT" (4:49-54).

- A. Jesus responded to the royal official with a command.
 - 1. Jesus ordered the official to go back home b/c his son was healed.
 - 2. The official believed Jesus and demonstrated his belief by leaving Jesus without any visible evidence of miracle.
- B. The official received confirmation before he ever saw his son.
 - 1. He came across some of his servants who were on their way to update him on his son's condition.
 - 2. He knew that Jesus had healed his son because it happened just as Jesus gave the command.
- C. The official's faith in JC was contagious – he shared it w/ his family.
 - 1. It was common then for the family to take on the faith of the father.
 - 2. That proves the authenticity of his faith.
 - a. He continued to believe in JC, even after his crisis was over.
 - b. He cared enough to share it with those he cared about most.
- D. This "second" sign rounds out Jesus' ministry in Cana of Galilee and provides an interesting parallel to his first sign in Cana.
 - 1. Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding to show that he was better than the religious rituals or traditions of the Jews.
 - 2. Jesus healed the royal officials' son to show that he was better than even the miracles that he did – Jesus is point, not the miraculous things he did – He didn't even have to visit the official's son.

Conclusion

- The 2 approaches to faith on display in this story teach us one main point: **faith that demands a sign is not really faith at all.**
 - This matches the definition of faith found in Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."
 - The rest of the chapter contains a list of OT characters who did amazing thing for God by faith.
 - These OT "heroes of the faith" all endured great hardships and died without seeing the resurrected Christ - the object of their faith.
 - This definition makes even more sense when we read about Jesus encounter with Thomas in John 20:24-29
 - Thomas refused to believe in the resurrection until he saw it for himself.
 - Jesus finally appeared to Thomas and invited him to touch his scars.
 - Jesus rebuked Thomas and blessed those who believe in him without seeing him (v.29).
- Augustine said, "Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that thou mayest believe, but believe that thou mayest understand."
- Which statement describes your faith? (when I see it, or b/c he said it)
- What's standing in the way of you exercising faith in Jesus Christ right now?
 - Are you holding out for a sign? (Nothing can top the resurrection)
 - Is it a lack of obedience (Genuine faith produces action, Ja. 2:18)
- **Faith that demands a sign is not really faith at all.**
- Those who are waiting for a sign will be left behind as the rest of us "go" in faith.