“GO; YOUR SON WILL LIVE”

As we left off our lesson last week the people of the Samaritan town of Sychar had just made their way out of town to Jacob’s well. READ John 4:28-30, 39-40. One testimony by one woman and it says that many believed in Jesus. Although we are not told for sure, I believe that the woman herself came to faith in Jesus after her conversation with Him.

READ John 4:39-42.

Jesus made an impact on the people of Sychar. Verse 42 makes it sound like the townspeople are downplaying the woman’s testimony. The truth is, without her testimony the people of Sychar would not have responded as they did. Her testimony was the catalyst for their belief in Jesus. The woman of Sychar made a profound difference even if she gets no recognition. There is a lesson here for us. People who plant seeds (like this woman) may not get any credit, but God knows who they are. He knows what they did and He will reward them. You and I may never know this side of heaven what words we said or what little things we did had an impact for the kingdom of God. Because this woman pointed the people of her little town to Jesus, they were able to see for themselves and many believed. And, of course, over the two days that Jesus spent with them, many more believed.

We have heard some wonderful testimonies about who Jesus is so far in our study of John. In verse 42 we have yet another powerful testimony concerning Jesus, this one from the people of Sychar (Samaritans): “This is indeed the Savior of the world.”

Well, Jesus, feeling refreshed from His experience in Samaria, travels northward into Galilee. This is His home area. However, what He encounters there is a contrast to what just happened in Samaria. The Samaritans believed Jesus was the Messiah, the Savior. He performed no miracles there. He never preached a sermon. No signs, no wonders, and yet the people believed. But in Galilee we will see that things are different.

READ John 4:43.

If you will recall, Galilee is where Jesus and His disciples had been heading when they left Judea (at the beginning of Chapter 4). They were going there, but in the meantime, verse 4 says,”He had to pass thru Samaria.” Samaria was a parenthesis of sorts in Jesus’ public ministry. It was a prophetic interlude because Jesus initially instructed His disciples not to go into any city of the Samaritans but to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6). Jesus went to the Jew first. His ministry began with Israel. He came as Messiah to Israel. He came to reach the Jews and then through Israel's belief to reach the world. But lest the Jewish people think that perhaps they are the only ones to receive God's blessing, right at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (here in John 4) He shows the true nature of His ministry by revealing Himself to some Samaritans. And this little interlude if you will shows that Jesus came not just for Israel, but for the whole world – just as the people of Sychar had proclaimed.

READ John 4:44.

Notice that this verse is in parentheses. John the writer is offering a commentary for his readers. Jesus and His disciples are journeying up to Galilee and at some point along the way Jesus says to them: “A prophet has no honor in his own hometown.” Now, we know from Luke Chapter 4 that Jesus was indeed rejected by His own hometown of Nazareth. After the only sermon Jesus ever preached in Nazareth, the people in the synagogue there reacted negatively to what He said. They didn’t like His message – basically it was a Messianic claim. So, they took Him out to the side of a hill just outside of Nazareth (note: Nazareth sits up on a hill overlooking the Jezreel Valley) and they were going to throw Him off a cliff to kill Him. But miraculously Jesus passed thru and they didn't know where He went. No honor in his hometown, only contempt.

[the question was asked last week when did this event in Nazareth occur chronologically. Had it happened yet?] John does not record the incident in Nazareth; only Luke does. The best guess is that it happened not on this visit to Galilee but on the next visit. He’s on His way to Galilee. He’ll stay there for a short period of time. Then He’ll head back to Jerusalem for the Passover. It will be on His next visit to Galilee after the Passover when the people of Nazareth try to kill Jesus. But Jesus knows what’s going to happen even before it happens. He’s God. Bottom line: He knows the hearts of the people.]

So Jesus says this to His disciples to let them know that there will not be any honor for Jesus in the place where He grew up. The home folks are going to have the attitude, "Oh, He’s just Jesus. We remember when He was a young man working in His father Joseph’s carpenters shop. So what can Jesus have to say to me?"

Jesus knew that He would be rejected by his own countrymen, but He goes anyway out of divine love. By the time we get to the end of John Chapter 5 Jesus chastises the people of Galilee: "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive…" (John 5:43). In Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth, you find no recorded miracles. He performed miracles in many other towns in Galilee, but not in Nazareth. And like I pointed out the only sermon Jesus ever preached in Nazareth was not received well. So Jesus is preparing His disciples for what they can expect in Galilee.

READ John 4:45.

Initially the Galileans receive Jesus with open arms. They had seen what He had done in Jerusalem at last year’s Passover Feast (John 2:23 says, “Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.”). They said, "Hey, Jesus the miracle worker is coming. Let's go see Him.” Some scholars and preachers criticize this kind of superficial belief. But it is part of God’s plan. (1) signs to show Jesus is from God; (2) claims to be the Messiah; (3) believing in His name, full-fledged that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

READ John 4:46-47.

An official, a man of high rank (“nobleman” KJV, “royal official” NASV official of the king, Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee), This man, who would have been considered a Herodian (not well liked by the Jews) is in Capernaum and he hears that Jesus is in Cana. He undoubtedly was aware of what the Galileans were saying about Jesus – that He was a miracle worker. So he travels the 20 miles from his home in Capernaum west to Cana. On foot that’s roughly an 8 hour journey over some pretty rugged terrain. He has a reason for going. He has a dying boy that he loves with all his heart. He sees in Jesus some desperate hope for life for his child. So he goes to Jesus. When he gets to Cana and finds Jesus the official says, "Sir, come down to Capernaum to where my son is and heal him." So he has at least a little faith (believes Jesus can heal but does not believe He can raise the dead). Give him some credit – he came to the right person.

There is a truth here that I want you to notice. If it were not for a dying son, this official probably would never have bothered with Jesus. He didn't have any great spiritual longings to know the Messiah. He wasn't all excited about spiritual truth. He wasn't concerned about getting his sins forgiven and his guilt released. He had no thoughts of any of that. But what he did have was a dying child and he wanted Jesus to heal that child if He could. He had a physical and emotional need and that's the only reason he goes to Jesus.

But that’s a tremendous thing. You see, nobody ever comes to Christ unless they are driven by a need. Jesus said as much in Matthew 9:12 when He looked at those Pharisees and said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." So until a person knows they’re sick, until they have a crying need that eats their heart out, they have no reason to go to Jesus. Here's a man who has a need. And I imagine there have been many people who have come to Jesus Christ because of a dying son, a dying daughter, the death of a mother, the death of a father, physical need, emotional healing. God can use any number of things, including tragedy and pain, to draw people to Him. And He does. Every time I hear a prayer request about somebody who is going through whatever, I can't help but wonder if God's purpose in that [whatever it is] is to ultimately bring that person or those close to them to Jesus.

Jesus responds to the man in verse 48. "So Jesus said to him..." and the "you" in the statement that follows is collective, it's a plural and it includes not just the official but all the Galileans standing around there, "...unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." He knows their hearts. He says, “Your kind of belief demands miracles.” So He's going to do a miracle – for the man, not for the masses.

READ John 4:49.

The man says, in essence, "You've got to go down to Capernaum as fast as you can while there is still time to help my son. He’s very sick and he’s going to die. You can do something about it before it’s too late." He has a very limited view of Jesus. But Jesus doesn’t go running off to Capernaum. Look at Jesus' response in verse 50...

“Go; your son will live.” While Jesus is talking right there, the omniscient, omnipresent power that Jesus possesses as the Son of God is 20 miles away touching the body of the official's son. Jesus never had to take a step. “The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.” How did he know his son was healed? No cell phone to confirm it with the folks back home. He believed Jesus. The man came and he needed a miracle to believe but now all of a sudden he doesn't need a miracle anymore. He believes the words of Jesus. With that the official heads for home. That’s all he needed to hear from Jesus. At this point he hasn’t seen a miracle. He believes, not because he sees a miracle, but because of the words of Jesus.

READ John 4:51-53.

The official realizes from the testimony of his servants that the moment Jesus said, "Go; your son will live" coincided exactly with when the fever left his son. He knew right then that Jesus had indeed healed his son.

Look at that little phrase in verse 53 “and he himself believed…” We know he believed earlier back in verse 50. So what is going on? The man's spiritual pilgrimage has taken him through various stages of belief. It started out with a superficial belief: “Maybe Jesus can help. I'm not sure, but He may be able to heal my sick son. I better hurry before my son dies.” It developed into a deeper belief, not in a miracle that he saw Jesus perform, but in the words that Jesus spoke. Now it has developed into full-fledged faith. The official now has faith in WHO the miracle worker Jesus is. It is this kind of belief you see in verse 53. So deep ran the man's faith that he had to share it with others and the result was that not only did he believe in Jesus, but so did his household, his whole family.

So in Chapter 4 we see Jesus ministering and having an impact on Samaritans (in Sychar) and Herodians (in Capernaum) – both groups hated by the Jews. Jesus came to seek and to save those who were lost – Jews, Gentiles, Samaritans, everyone.

Chapter 4 closes with a final footnote. READ John 4:54.

The first sign was the wine that Jesus made at the wedding. That was a private miracle. Only Jesus’ disciples and a few others knew what He did. But it fostered a deeper belief in them. The same with His second sign which we just looked at. It wasn’t for the masses. It was for this man and his household. It too was a private miracle. It is only by the testimony of those who knew what Jesus did that others would know about it. Our testimony is important.

You know some people come to faith in Christ just believing in the awesome person of Jesus Christ. They don't need anything else. Jesus is revealed to them and they believe and follow Him. John the Baptist and Andrew and the Apostle John all fell into this category. They followed Jesus with full faith right off the bat. They believed that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Still others believe the words of Jesus. His words are enough to foster belief. The woman at the well and the people of Sychar fell into this category. The woman's testimony was "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" The people of Sychar "We believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world." Finally others need to see a sign, a miracle. Only then will they believe. The people of Galilee and most of the people that Jesus will encounter in our study in the Gospel of John fall into this category. Jesus said to the official and to the rest of the crowd in Cana, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." It doesn’t matter which category you fall into. Jesus will meets all of us at the point of our unbelief. Why? Because He loves us. He wants to have a relationship with us. He wants to save us.

Reminder about the purpose statement of John (20:31).

Next week Jesus will make His way back to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast and will perform another miracle there – it is one of my favorite stories about Jesus.