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# JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

## *BELIEVING CHRIST'S WORD*

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A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter  
to First Baptist Church of Diana, TX on May 21, 2017

### INTRODUCTION

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Jesus performed many miracles during His earthly ministry. He healed the lame, gave sight to the blind, and even brought the dead back to life. Jesus' miracles were a major reason for His notoriety, but Jesus urged His hearers to look beyond the things He was doing. His greater interest was that His hearers would listen faithfully to His words. In our day, many people are still quite interested in having Jesus do something for them. Yet, the most potent effects that Jesus may produce in us will come as a result of His words and not His hands.

### **JOHN 4:43-54 (ESV)**

43 After the two days he [Jesus] departed for Galilee. 44 (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.)

45 So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast.

46 So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine.

And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. 47 When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.

48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."

49 The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. 51 As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. 52 So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."

53 The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household.

54 This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

## THE POINT I'M AIMING AT TODAY:

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**Don't merely seek the hands of Christ; seek His face and His glory in His word.**

## MESSAGE OUTLINE:

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**(1) A WALK THROUGH THE PASSAGE**

**(2) CONTRASTING JESUS' HANDS WITH HIS WORD**

**(3) APPLICATION: SEEK HIS FACE AND HIS GLORY IN HIS WORD**

## MESSAGE

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### **(1) A WALK THROUGH THE PASSAGE**

43 After the two days he [Jesus] *departed for Galilee*.

- Short Duration
  - Jesus' short time with the Samaritans is contrasted with His extended ministry to His own Jewish people.
- Samaria was a Parenthesis
  - Jesus departed Judea (4:1-2) in order to avoid a premature confrontation with the Pharisees. He was on His way to Galilee, but He "*had to [must needs] pass through Samaria*" (4:4).

44 (For Jesus himself had testified that *a prophet has no honor in his own hometown*.)

45 So when *he came to Galilee*, the *Galileans welcomed him*, having *seen all that he had done in Jerusalem* at the feast. For *they too had gone to the feast*.

- What 'hometown'
  - First, while Nazareth was Jesus' hometown (specifically), it does not seem that the intent here is to say that *Cana is better than Nazareth* in its reception of Jesus.
  - Second, *patris* can be translated "hometown" or "homeland"
    - Therefore, "hometown" seems to point more towards Galilee generally, for Jesus was also called a "Galilean" (Matt. 26:69).

- If the 'hometown' is Galilee, then what's with the "welcome"
  - The *welcome* is a misguided one
    - The Galileans welcomed Jesus as a miracle worker
      - "they too had gone to *the feast*" – the "Passover Feast" mentioned in Jn. 2:23.
      - At the Passover Feast, "*many believed in his name when they saw the signs he was doing*" (Jn. 2:23).
        - But this was not genuine belief, since Jesus "did not entrust himself to them" (v24) because He "knew what was in them" (v25).
      - John is telling us that these Galileans are the same as those who were only after Jesus' signs in Jerusalem.
        - Thus, Jesus' lack of "*honor in his own hometown*" is a reference to their superficial "belief" in Him and "welcome" of Him.
- In fact, John seems to be circling back around
  - Carson says – "for the Evangelist vv. 43–54 round out a theme begun in ch. 2. Indeed, John provides several allusions to ch. 2, as if he is self-consciously completing an *inclusio* [or ellipsis]:"<sup>1</sup>
    - the references to Cana (2:1; 4:46)
    - the miracle of water-to-wine (2:1–11; 4:46)
    - Capernaum (2:12; 4:46)
    - faulty faith based on miracles (2:23–25; 4:45, 48)
    - even an explicit numbering of the miracles (2:11; 4:54)
    - All of this, Carson says, draws attention to the closing of John's circle.
- But, to what point is John circling back?

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<sup>1</sup>Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 237). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

- I think it's "**Believe**"
  - Remember John's whole purpose: "These things are written **so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name**" (20:31).
  - "**Believe**" in Ch. 2
    - Jesus turned water into wine, and His "**disciples believed in him**" (2:11).
    - Jesus chased people out of the temple, and prophesied about His resurrection, and His disciples "**believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken**" (2:22).
    - Then there were the ones who '**believed**' but didn't really **believe**, because they saw signs (2:23-25).
  - "**Believe**" in Ch. 4
    - Jesus told the woman at the well to "**believe me...**" (4:21), and it seems she did (4:29).
    - "**Many Samaritans from that town believed in him [Jesus] because of the woman's testimony**" (4:39).
    - "**Many more believed because of his [Jesus'] word**" (4:41).
    - "**They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world'**" (4:42).
    - Then Jesus rebuked the Galileans, "**Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe**" (4:48).
    - The official with the sick son "**believed the word that Jesus spoke to him...**" (4:50).
    - The official and his household "**believed...**" (4:53).
  - The disciples believed, the woman believed, the Samaritans believed, the official and his household believed...
    - But many merely looked at signs, and these did not truly believe...

- Here, now, John seems to be calling the reader to believe Jesus beyond His miraculous ability.
  - “Believe!” I am hearing John say... “Believe the words of Christ! Hear the Master speak, and give yourself over to devotion and submission to His words.”
    - The reason I hear this is because John points to an exemplary character in the passage – a person to emulate – who increasingly believes Jesus.

46 So he [Jesus] came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. 47 ***When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.***

- John **introduces** the exemplary character of this passage (1 of 4)
  - In this first mention we learn much about the man
    - A. The man was an “official.”
      - He was a “royal official” or “nobleman” of the court of Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee
    - B. The man had a dying son
      - We are not told the age of the son, but the man calls him “*my little child*” (παιδιον μου) in v49.
      - The language cannot be stronger... the boy was almost dead, and there was no hope of recovery.
    - C. The man heard that Jesus was a miracle-worker.
      - This is why the man came to Jesus when he heard that Jesus was in Galilee.
    - D. The man desperately wanted Jesus to heal his son.
      - Who cannot understand the burning desperation of this father?

48 So Jesus said to him, "*Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.*"

- Ouch!
  - This seems out of character for Jesus... but, on the other hand...
    - ***Jesus rebuked His mother*** when He intended to address something bigger than what she put in front of Him (Jn. 2:4).
    - ***Jesus rebuked Nicodemus*** when He wanted to show how powerless people are to bring spiritual life to themselves (Jn. 3:9).
    - ***Jesus rebuked the Samaritan woman*** who wanted to keep the conversation superficial (Jn. 4:16-26).
    - ***Jesus rebuked His disciples*** when they were focused on temporal matters and blinded to the harvest of spiritual life right in front of them (Jn. 4:34-38).
      - On second thought, this is exactly the kind of statement we should expect from Jesus.
        - Jesus does not let us remain ignorant about our distractions, rather, He confronts us and them.
- A Plural Rebuke
  - As usual, there is more to this rebuke than first meets the eye.
    - The two "you"s in this verse are plural.
      - The NASB says, "*Unless you people see signs and wonders...*"
        - Jesus is using this man as an object lesson for all to see and hear, but Jesus' compassion and grace is evident in what follows.

49 The official said to him, "*Sir, come down before my child dies.*"

- The exemplary character ***speaks*** (2 of 4)
  - This is at least the second thing the man said to Jesus, though the earlier words are not recorded.
    - The man must have pleaded with Jesus and explained his plight – "*My son is dying; will you please come down and heal him?*" (v47).

- Now, after Jesus has publically rebuked all who seek “signs and wonders” (miracles), the man humbly repeats his plea.
  - We learn one more thing about this royal official, this father with a dying son.
    - He is not only desperate, he is selflessly desperate.
      - He has abandoned all decorum. This man who leads and commands others does not acknowledge the rebuke he has just been given. He merely pleads again, “*Sir, please come and heal my dying son...*”

50 Jesus said to him, “Go; your son will live.” ***The man believed the word that Jesus spoke*** to him and went on his way.

- Jesus heals by the power of His word
  - John (the Gospel writer) records only this brief statement from Jesus, “Go; your son will live.” (v50).
    - We know that John is pointing to the power and the words of Jesus, because John tells us that the father learned from his servant that his son was healed at the “**hour when Jesus had said to him, ‘Your son will live’**” (v53).
      - It is no coincidence that John is linking the high desire of the Galileans with the supreme power of Christ’s words.
- The exemplary character **acts** (3 or 4)
  - The desperate man, who believes Jesus is a miracle-worker, now believes “**the word that Jesus spoke,**” and he “**went on his way.**”
    - This is an act of increased belief, but the object has not necessarily changed.
      - The man asked for Jesus to “**come down**” to heal his son.
        - This implies a miracle from proximity.
      - Now the man believes Jesus can heal his son with a word.
      - Jesus still seems to be a miracle-working in the man’s sight, but the man has grown in his own belief.

51 As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. 52 So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour [counting from sunrise, this would be about 1pm] the fever left him.” 53 The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” And **he himself believed, and all his household.**

- The exemplary character **believes** (4 of 4)
  - We have moved from desperation to hope – from hope to belief in Jesus to heal – and now from belief in Jesus to heal to belief in Jesus as Christ.
    - **Desperation to Hope** – man’s son is dying, but the miracle-worker is near
    - **Hope to Belief in Jesus to Heal** – Jesus gives the word, and the man believes Jesus can heal his dying son
    - **Belief in Jesus to Heal to Belief in Jesus as the Messiah/Christ** –
      - man and household believe, but son is already healed...
      - belief is no longer for healing, but something more...
      - unqualified and desired “belief” according to John (*the Gospel writer*) is none other than saving belief or faith

54 This was now **the second sign that Jesus did** when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

- See His Glory, Believe Jesus
  - Echoing John 2:11
    - “**This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.**”
  - John’s **anchor** and **refrain**
    - “**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth**” (1:14).
    - “**to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...**” (1:12).
- Specifically, Believe Jesus’ Word
  - The Samaritans believed Jesus’ word (v41), but Jesus rebuked the Galileans for wanting signs (v48), however, John shows us that one Galilean (and his family) believed the word of Jesus (v50, 53).

## (2) CONTRASTING JESUS' HANDS WITH HIS WORD

- John is contrasting the two options
  - **Seeking Jesus' Hands**
    - Jewish leaders wanted Jesus to perform for them to validate His authority (2:18).
    - Many people believed Jesus was a miracle-worker, but they were only fascinated by Him (2:23-25).
    - Jesus rebuked the Galileans for wanting signs (4:48).
  - **Believing Jesus' Word**
    - Jesus' disciples saw His signs and believed something more of Him (2:11).
    - Jesus' disciples believed His words, and thus accepted and submitted to His authority (2:22).
    - Nicodemus knew about Jesus' signs, but he was more interested in knowing who Jesus really was (3:2).
    - A Samaritan woman and her townsmen believed the word of Christ without any signs at all (4:41-42).
    - The desperate Galilean father believed the word of Jesus, and so too did his household (4:50, 53).
- Scripture generally contrasts God's word with all lesser treasures
  - *“18 For **the word of the cross** is folly to those who are perishing, but **to us who are being saved it is the power of God**. 19 For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.' 20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, **it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe**. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For **the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men**” (1 Corinthians 1:18–25).*

### (3) APPLICATION: SEEK HIS FACE AND HIS GLORY IN HIS WORD

- What is it that you seek most?
  - Everyone has the same basic needs – not just food, water, shelter, clothing, etc...
    - Purpose for living
    - Refuge in times of difficulty
    - Hope in times of suffering
    - Wisdom for living well
    - An objective place to turn for all the most important things:
      - Who am I? What am I worth? How shall I live? Where am I going?
  - Where to you seek the answers to these questions?
    - Is your purpose for living your family and/or friends?
    - Is your refuge the safety of your property or investments?
    - Is your hope that tomorrow will simply be better?
    - Is your wisdom based merely in life experience?
      - **The answers are from the ‘loving voice’ of Christ.**

On Sunday evening, March 18, 1855, Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892) looked to his Bible and declared in his sermon: “If these words were written by a man, we might reject them; but O let me think the solemn thought, that this book is God’s handwriting — that these words are God’s!” Spurgeon’s wife, Susannah (1832 – 1903), also believed in the divine authorship of Scripture. Reflecting on John 14:27, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,” Susannah asserted that those “tender words” were words of “Jesus Christ himself, my gracious Lord and Master, who thus speaks, and I shall do well to ponder every weighty sentence as I listen to his loving voice.” For Susannah, the words of Scripture were “the loving voice” of Jesus Christ.

- These questions have answers, but the greater joy is the voice of the Savior
  - All the above flow from the first and more meaningful reality: My Savior is near!
    - A child who cries out from the bed at night, fearfully pleading for mother or father... When the voice is heard, fears are stilled and all is well, because the voice means mother or father is near.

**Major Point: Don't merely seek the hands of Christ;  
seek His face and His glory in His word.**

## SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

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*From Foxhole Faith to Saving Faith* by Steven Cole

<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-25-foxhole-faith-saving-faith-john-443-54>

*Go, Your Son Will Live* by John Piper

<http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/go-your-son-will-live>

*Expository Thoughts* by J.C. Ryle

<http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=32710>