

Gospel of John Study

Session 11

In the last session we saw how Jesus overcame the barriers of race, religion and sex in order to bring a Samaritan woman to salvation and then how that led to a village coming to saving faith in Jesus. After Jesus spent two days with the Samaritans, they came to see Him as the Savior of the World. The apostle John used this account to show a sharp distinction between how Nicodemus, a respected leader of the Jews, received Jesus' message and how an unknown Samaritan woman who lived a less than moral lifestyle received Jesus's message.

In this session we are going to note that Jesus and His disciples make back to Jewish turf in Galilee. It is here in His home area where John sets up another vital contrast - this time between the Samaritans of Sychar and the Jews of Galilee, the area where Jesus grew up. John is going to further refine for us the nature of genuine faith in Christ and what it looks like.

Before looking at what real faith looks like, we need to review the purpose of the book.

[John 20:30-31]

The goal of John was to present evidence that Jesus was both the Christ and the Son of God and by trusting in these truths, one would gain eternal life.

[John 4:43-45]

Q: Why do you think it is important for John to give an exact number of days in v.43? *(This sets up the timeline that Jesus left Samaria and went straight to Galilee, His intended destination from when He left Judea (4:3). It lets us know that there is no intervening time between the visit to Sychar and His visit in Galille, thus these two narratives a linked in some manner.)*

Q: What was Jesus' statement about honor? *(v.44 - that a prophet has no honor in his own country 'home turf'.)*

Q: According to v. 45, why were the people of Galilee happy to see Jesus? Why did they receive Him warmly? *(They had been in Jerusalem for the feast and had witnessed many miracles that Jesus had done. Now the show had come to them.)*

These Jews in Galilee are spiritually curious about Jesus. He had grown up in their neck of the woods but was a mere carpenter. Some of them knew His family and saw nothing special about them. Now in Jerusalem, He cleansed the Temple and He performed many miracles. By this time, the news of Jesus turning the water into wine at the recent wedding had become well-known in the area. They were not nearly as interested in hearing a message from Jesus as they were in seeing Him perform more miraculous acts. These people came out to see Jesus because they were curious about Him.

[John 4: 39-42]

Q: What initially motivated the Samaritans from Sychar to go out and see Jesus? *(v.39 -*

curiosity from hearing the testimony from the woman at the well)

Q: In the end, why did the Samaritans from Sychar believe Jesus was the Savior? *(v.41 - they believed in His Word)*

The important thing to keep in mind is that curiosity is not genuine faith. It may lead to genuine faith at some point, like in the Samaritan account, but cannot replace faith. There are many today who are curious about Jesus or “spiritual” matters and they wander into church or listen to Christian podcasts but this is not what saves them. Curiosity may actually lead one to seek Christ in time but it also may just lead one on an never-ending quest for higher and higher levels of entertainment, like surfing channels with your TV remote. Unfortunately, what we are going to see in Galilee is the latter.

[John 4:46-48]

Q: Who was specifically mentioned as coming to see Jesus once He made it to Galilee? *(v.46 - a royal official.)*

Q: Why was this royal official wanting to see Jesus? *(vv. 46-7 - His son was sick and he wanted Jesus to heal his son.)*

Q: Where did the royal official want Jesus to go to do the healing? *(v.47 - He wanted Jesus to travel with Him to where the boy was at Capernaum. He wanted Jesus to be there physically.)*

Q: What was Jesus response to when he heard the royal official’s plea for Jesus’ help? *(v.48 - Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.)*

The pronoun “you” in v.48 is plural. Jesus is not just indicting the royal official but also the population of the entire region, in general. This statement by Jesus is meant to exemplify what is wrong with the Galileans as a whole, and actually the Jewish people as a whole. This man really didn’t have any solid faith in Jesus at this moment. He had heard that He did miracles of healing and was desperate.

Q: With this background, why do you think Jesus did not travel to Capernaum with the royal official to heal his son in person? *(To do this would be to just do another miracle, another show for the masses. They, the general population who would have witnessed the miracle, would be “wow-ed” but not moved to faith by another show of God’s goodness and power.)*

This royal official was desperate and it leads to another revelation about genuine faith and that is that real faith is not an emotional feeling but rather an informed belief. It’s based upon the true knowledge of Jesus and not upon any feelings we may be having at the moment.

In John 6, Jesus feeds the 5,000 men (with an estimated additional 15,000 women and children in tow) from a single sacked lunch. After everyone has eaten all they can eat and their hunger is completely satisfied and Jesus’ disciples have picked up 12 full baskets of left-overs,

Jesus departed and the crowds followed Him. They were hoping to get another free meal. Jesus begins to teach them that they should work for the bread that comes from heaven, not physical bread. He tells them that He is the bread of life and that they need to eat His body. Yet, He is speaking of spiritual matters, not physical matters. The crowds miss the connection and continue to misunderstand Jesus' teaching and eventually quit following Him. They were enthused to be with Him when He was feeding them miraculously but they didn't want His teaching, His Words. It was an emotional following of Jesus. Listen to the aftermath.

[John 6: 66-69]

In the book of John, too much interest in raw miracles themselves is dangerous. Miracles cannot compel genuine faith. They are not to be neglected or despised either. Like the conversation with the woman at the well, they can be gateways that can lead people to come to know the truth of Jesus but in themselves don't do it. This is why John often calls these acts "signs and wonders" because they are not the end message but rather attest to the true identity of the person performing the miracle - in this case - Jesus.

Q: Contrary to the masses, what did Peter have to say about Jesus when asked if the disciples also wanted to leave Him, too? (v.68-9 - *No, because Jesus had the words of life. They had come to know who Jesus truly was through His teachings and believe that these teachings were true. They understood that there was nowhere else to go to get the true teachings of God and eternal life.*)

[Romans 10:17]

Q: According to this verse, what is the source for genuine faith? (*hearing the Word of Christ*)

On a much larger scale this renouncing of Jesus happened again within the Jewish community on Palm Sunday and throughout the Passion week. They hailed Him as their Savior on Sunday and then crucified Him the following Friday. Their faith was not built upon the teaching of Christ but rather upon emotions, curiosity, speculations, as well as mis-timed expectations of the Messiah.

This account of Jesus encountering the Samaritan woman and the community at Sychar is sandwiched between two accounts of Jesus speaking to Jews. The placement of the story of the Samaritan woman is intentional by John in that it reminds the reader who Jesus truly is: the Messiah, the One who has been sent by His Heavenly Father to reap a spiritual harvest for eternal life, the Savior of the world. This shows the large-scale failure of the Jews to come to terms with the identity of Jesus. In the apostle John's eyes this shows the tragedy of the situation in that the despised Samaritans receive eternal life while the Jews, Jesus' own people and God's covenant community either actively oppose Him or cannot walk with Him beyond a fascination with the miracles He performed or the politics of the day.

This passage and the others we've noted show us that faith is not a blind leap into unknown or the ride on the crest of a wave of emotions. Genuine faith is an informed belief

about Jesus: who He is and what He does. The book of John was written to inform those who read the book who Jesus actually was and why He came to earth. Our decision to put our trust in Jesus requires that we know and believe the basic facts that Jesus was the Son of God and the Messiah or Savior from God.

[John 4:49-54]

The royal official is not interested in Christology at this point or prophecies being fulfilled. He is only interested in the well-being of his son. He again begs Jesus for help.

Q: What does Jesus say to the royal official? (*v.50 - Go, your son lives*)

Q: What was the royal official's attitude about Jesus' words? (*v.50 - He believed them and headed home*)

This encounter shows that this man, a Galilean, is different from most of the rest. This man isn't interested in seeing a miracle as much as he wanted God's mercy. By departing from Jesus after being told his son lived, the man demonstrated true faith. He heard Jesus' words and acted upon them.

Q: What happens to the royal official on the way home? (*v.51 - he ran into his slaves coming to tell him that his son had recovered from the near fatal illness.*)

Q: What did the royal official ask his slaves? (*v.52 - What time did his son begin to get better*)

This information allowed the man's faith in Jesus to be strengthened. His son's healing was no coincidence now. It happened at the same time Jesus told him that his son was better.

Q: What was the result of the royal official's faith? (*v.53 - he believed in Jesus along with his whole household*)

It is important that John saw the word of Christ to be more powerful than miracles when it comes to salvation. **Matthew 4:4** says that man does not live by bread alone but by everything that proceeds from the mouth of God. **Isaiah 40:8** says that the grass withers and the flower fades but the word of God stands forever. It is what gives us the knowledge of the truth.

By this point in the book of John we have encountered eight different titles for Jesus. These are titles John has pointed out thus far to allow those reading his gospel to come to faith in Jesus Christ. We need to review these titles for ourselves.

- 1) **[John 1:1]** - Jesus is the Word, who perfectly revealed God to man and is the message of God to man.
- 2) **[John 1:29]** & (John 1:36) - Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

3) **[John 1:34]** - Jesus is called the Son of God. He has a unique relationship with the Heavenly Father.

4) **[John 1:38]** & (John 3:2) - Jesus is called Rabbi, the One who can teach us accurately about what God is like and how to be reconciled to Him.

5) **[John 1:41]** - Jesus is described as the Messiah - who was the One who would fulfill all the Old Testament promises of God.

6) **[John 1:49]** - Jesus is called the King of Israel and sit on His throne and rule God's people.

7) **[John 1:51]** - Jesus is called the Son of Man. He is the One who Daniel prophesied would have an eternal kingdom which would be filled with people from every language and nation in the world.

8) **[John 4:42]** - Jesus is called the Savior of the World. He's the One who would die on the cross to pay for the sins of mankind and make salvation possible for everyone.

So by this time in the book of John, he has given us all we need to know to come to faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

John closes this section with the note that this was the second sign performed by Jesus in Galilee. The first was turning the water into wine and this is the second one done in that region to help the people see that He was the Messiah they had been waiting for. Now Jesus had done a great number of signs in the southern part of Israel, in Judea and Jerusalem. Yet, He didn't do many in His home region. While there may have been other miracles Jesus performed in Galilee, none of them are "counted" by John in the rest of his book. Turning the water into wine and then healing the royal official's son from a distance are the only two John points out in this manner. What is interesting about these two miracles is that they were both "under the radar" in nature. Only the servants knew Jesus turned the water into wine, though news got out about it, it wasn't something seen by all. This miracles with the royal official's son was likewise, not flashy or seen by anyone.

[Matthew 13:53-58]

Q: Why do you think Jesus did only a few miracles in His own home country? *(Their familiarity with Jesus' human nature, his family and upbringing led them to limit their faith in Him. There are other possible explanations for their lack of genuine faith in Jesus.)*

[II Peter 1:3-4]

Q: What has granted people everything pertaining to life and godliness according to v.3? *(the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence - Christ)*

So genuine faith is built upon true knowledge of Christ, not our curiosity, our emotions or

our human expectations or speculations. This true knowledge of Jesus leads a person to salvation. Belief in true knowledge leads to belief in a “big God” (the real God) as opposed to belief in knowledge that is inaccurate leads to belief in a “little god” (one of a person’s own imagination).

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?