

Week 6 ~ Authentic Faith (John 4:43-54)

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Crossroads Christian Church

By: Phil Heller, Lead Pastor

- Welcome to my home and thanks for welcoming me into yours as we worship together today.
- We continue to pray for God to help us be full of faith, wise, and loving to our neighbors as we walk through this challenging time.
- Thanks for heeding the directions of our local, state, and national leaders by staying at home and caring for others as you have opportunity
- We are grateful to have you engage in worshipping our great God and pray you'll continue to do that daily
- I'd love for you to turn with me to John 4
- As a church, we are studying through the book of John learning how to live and love like Jesus.
- Today, the passage we want to look at involves a child being ill, healing, and a picture of authentic faith we can all be encouraged by
- Read along with me beginning with verse 43

JOHN 4:43-45

-Jesus is completing a journey recorded by John beginning in Chapter 2. Jesus attends a wedding at Cana in Galilee and turns water into wine; then travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover; after which, he is visited by a religious leader named Nicodemus; and then begins his journey back to his home passing through Samaria where he meets a woman at a well and reveals his true identity as Messiah to her and many from her village. After spending 2 days in Samaria, he now returns to Galilee near his home of Nazareth. He would call this area "home".

[2012, met Darius Miller from the National Championship team, Maysville, from the same dirt]

- Jesus quoted a popular proverb about how prophets are not shown honor in their hometown.
- This is a pretty strong statement that could seem random or even contradictory when John immediately says that those in Galilee welcomed him.
- It helps to refer back to an earlier statement in Chapter 2 about their level of faith in Jesus

JOHN 2:23-25

-Jesus, knowing their hearts completely, knew these people from home had been with Him and the Passover Festival and were amazed at the miracles he had performed but were not really interested in his true identity as Messiah or Savior.

-Jesus knew that if people were only focused on the physical impact of his power they would miss his true mission which was spiritual...offering eternal life through his death and resurrection

-He faced the pressure constantly to become what people wanted him to be...simply a miracle worker...a political leader who would free them from Roman domination...to become an earthly king

-Some scholars feel that's why he returned to his hometown where he would avoid his popularity growing for the wrong purposes

-John in the prologue states "He came to his own but his own did not receive him" (John 1:11)

-Let's see what happens next

JOHN 4:46-48

-While Jesus was visiting Cana, this royal official, many believe was a soldier who served Herod Antipas, who was the political leader in this area, came to Jesus asking for him to heal his son.

-Before we discover how Jesus helps this young boy, realize that his initial response is really directed at all the people, not really the man alone, and reflects his previous challenge about their faith.

-It might be helpful to contrast the response the people of Samaria had to Jesus just listening to his words with the continual demand by the Jewish people for a physical sign or miracle.

- “Welcomed him” might refer to their anticipation for another miracle or 2, not authentic faith
- Coming from a powerful, spiritually charged moment where many people in Samaria had believed just by hearing His words and trusted in Him as not just Messiah, but Savior, Jesus is challenging those in his hometown to grow in their faith past just waiting and looking for another miracle.
- This is consistent with Jesus’ initial invitation to his first disciples we read about in John 1
- He invited them to “come and see” but He wasn’t referring to miracles but rather to his identity.
- In fact, Jesus told Nathaniel who was initially impressed by Jesus’ miraculous power, “You will come to see me for who I truly am...the Son of Man from Heaven!”
- After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples in the flesh and Thomas, one of the disciples wasn’t present
- When the others told Thomas they had seen Jesus resurrected, he said, **“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” (John 20:25)**
- A week later, Jesus appeared to the disciples again and Thomas was present this time. Jesus invited him to put fingers in nail holes and touch his side and Thomas proclaimed, “My Lord and my God!”
- Listen to Jesus’ response: **“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”(John 20:29)**
- This is a good working definition of authentic faith!
- Hebrews 11:1 Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.**
- Jesus continually challenges his followers to believe in His true identity and to demonstrate true faith...trusting God to be who He is even though we’ve never seen God.
- Jesus came so we would have a picture of God so our faith could grow.
- He performed miraculous signs to give proof of His deity and to display the power of God so our faith could grow.
- But ultimately, faith is believing without seeing...having confidence and assurance in who God is even when we can’t see him or see how he’s working...
- This is authentic faith, and now we will see a living example of it.
- JOHN 4:46b-54**
- This soldier was a dad and was desperate. Regardless of his power & authority, he was in need!
- He had heard of Jesus changing water into wine in his hometown; everyone there had heard about it. That’s the only miracle John has mentioned specifically so far, but word was spreading about Jesus’ miraculous power.
- What was wrong with his son in unnamed other than it came with a fever
- This man seemed confident Jesus could help and sought him out
- Jesus was not reluctant to help. He didn’t need to go with the man to heal his son
- Jesus healed his son and told the man to go back home
- No one would have ever heard of anyone having the ability to heal from a distance. This is like God saying, “Let there be light” and because Jesus is God, he could speak with the same power. -I love that our God is that powerful!
- I also love how the man responded: **“The man took Jesus at his word and departed.” (John 4:50b)**
- What a picture of authentic faith...believing without seeing...being confident of what he hoped.
- As the man travelled back home, some of his servants met him and said, “The boy is alive!”
- The dad inquired as to the time when the boy got better and it was the exact time Jesus had said he was healed!
- John records that this man and all his household, most likely including his wife, his other children, and even his servants, all believed in Jesus.

-Their belief was the same type of belief the people had in Samaria... in who Jesus is...the same type of belief that brings life...not just physical life but spiritual life...the faith described not found in seeing miracles, but finding eternal life in who Jesus is as Messiah, Savior, and Lord

-There's a strong truth found in the progression of the authentic faith demonstrated by this father
REASON-it began by him hearing about who Jesus is and what he had done and mentally considering, "if this is true, maybe he could help my son"

-Authentic faith doesn't require you to chuck your brain out the window. It asks you to recognize the wisdom presented and then take action based upon it; to recognize the truth in who Jesus says He is and to trust Him at His word.

-I think it takes an interesting faith to believe that God didn't create the world, he didn't perform all the miracles in the OT, that Jesus didn't come to earth and perform miracles or die and come back to life than it does to recognize the truth as proclaimed in the Bible. Intelligent design appeals to reason more than evolution or other theories.

-It doesn't require seeing to believe, though, either

TRUST- the father went looking for Jesus to help and begged Jesus to come to his house and help his son. When Jesus told him the boy was going to live, the man TOOK JESUS AT HIS WORD and went back home to find the son just as Jesus said.

-He obeyed Jesus' instructions just like the servants at the wedding -water became wine

-Faith will require a response. Faith without action is not authentic faith

-**James 2:26 "Faith without deeds is dead"**

[chair analogy, story of the tightrope walker with the wheelbarrow]

-Faith requires action. Abraham believed God and took his son to offer him as a sacrifice.

-This father came believing Jesus and went back home trusting what Jesus promised

REST/SATISFACTION/DEPENDENCY-faith when it is full grown is displayed by a level of rest, satisfaction, and dependency in God that trusts Him with everything, and most importantly, with the most important aspect of life...salvation.

-It's a recognition and an acceptance that I can't do life on my own, nor can I live a holy life, that I need help and I trust in who Jesus says He is and what he offers...forgiveness and grace, salvation from the mess I've made of life and the sin I have committed, and the promise of eternal life in Heaven, all as a free gift I receive by faith and live in response to! Eternal life comes by entrusting your life into the hands of Jesus

ROMANS 5:1-11

-Jesus desires authentic faith, not just an excitement over the miracles he has and can perform, but a trusting, abiding dependence on Him to meet our greatest need...salvation, and having received life in Him, to live the rest of our lives trusting in Him and sharing that faith with others.

-Authentic faith is grounded in WHO Jesus is not just what He does; not just for the benefits

-**Grant Osbourne, "Wonderment centered on the sensational will never suffice for genuine faith."**

-We have no better time than to have authentic faith and to share that faith than right now

-I couldn't leave his passage today without pointing out some truths relevant to where we find ourselves right now in history dealing with this world-wide pandemic of the coronavirus

-Let me begin by making sure we all recognize the source of all illness, disease, and death

-It is not God!

-He created man and woman in the Garden of Eden in perfection, with no sickness, illness, disease, or death. We call the state they were created in **Shalom- the webbing together of God, humanity, and all creation for justice, fulfillment, and delight. It is universal flourishing.**

- However, when sin entered the world by Adam and Eve disobeying God, so did sickness, illness, and death. That was never how God wanted things to go or turn out.
- Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden by God after they sinned. God then prevented mankind from eating from the tree of life and living forever.
- Humankind would stay physical and would ultimately die. With a physical body, physical weaknesses would be acquired and passed onto future generations so that, in time, sicknesses would develop “quite naturally” based on the fact that man, cut off from God, would continue to live in a world inspired by satan
- Ultimately, then, physical sickness was introduced into the world through the original sin of Adam and Eve.
- I truly believe sin brought destruction of all kind into our world and satan is at the source
- It was satan who brought sickness to Job’s life even though Job was righteous
- So we cannot say all sickness, illness, and disease is a punishment from God
- While there are consequences for sin and some sin can bring with it illness (sexual immorality and STDs is an example), sin wreaks all kinds of havoc, disorder, chaos, and discord in our lives
- Jesus saw satan and the demonic as the source of disease and affliction in people’s lives but said in at least 1 instance, that a person’s sin didn’t cause these. We will see this later in John 9.
- And we see time and after time, Jesus heals the sick, the diseased, and raised the dead to life
- A fulfillment of the prophecies about the Messiah is that He would bring healing and restore life.
- Jesus’ sacrifice, which can be applied to obtain forgiveness of spiritual sin, can also be applied, then, to obtain freedom from all the consequences of sin **“By his stripes we are healed” (Is 53:5)**
- I hope you are tracking with me...
- It’s most clear in Jesus’ statement from **John 10:10: The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.**

[meme credited to CS Lewis, reminds me of the Screwtape Letters, but seems to apply & = truth
 SATAN: “I will cause anxiety, fear and panic. I will shut down business, school, places of worship, and sports events. I will cause economic turmoil.”
 JESUS: “I will bring together neighbors, restore the family unit, I will bring dinner back to the kitchen table. I will help people slow down their lives and appreciate what really matters, I will teach my children to rely on me and not the world. I will teach my children to trust me and not their money and material resources.”

- Jesus is very clear: his purpose is to bring life!**
- Let’s not be quick to blame an ethnic group, a conspiracy, or even God in this midst of this pandemic as we see people sick with fever, ill, even dying
- We can seek His help, He’s capable of healing. We must trust Him.
- Even though Jesus allowed time to lapse between hearing about one of his best friends, Lazarus, being sick and then dying, when he arrived he proclaimed, **“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” (John 11:25-26).**
- Jesus didn’t heal every sick person or raise everyone who died; Lazarus died again after rising
- Place your faith not in just the miracle worker but in Jesus being the resurrection and the life...not just physical life but spiritual life...eternal life!
- “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12**
- The father in this encounter with Jesus responded to the invitation Jesus made to place his faith in who He truly is and to find life in his name, and he received not just physical life for his son, but everyone in his household found eternal life in Him!

-John says this is the 2nd sign he did in Cana. Jesus did more and will continue to do more miracles so people will know with confidence who He is and their faith will become authentic!

-Tim Keller says, "Life giving faith grows pure and strong and beautiful in the same place as gold...the furnace."

-So be full of faith...trust in Jesus for help in this time, even if you can't see how He is working, and rest in Him as the source of eternal life at all times

-Respond in authentic faith as you seek to honor His way of living by loving others

[Rodney Stark, "The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History" [Princeton, 1996]]

In the days of the early church, two deadly epidemics hit the Roman Empire (165 AD and 251 AD).

Afterwards the church was stronger. Christians had a higher survival rate because they cared for each other. Also, many people were so impressed by the way Christians cared for non-Christian victims that many turned to Jesus.

-Authentic faith responds to who Jesus is and the ways He has revealed himself to us by living and loving like Him.

PRAY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

-How has God shown up in your life in the past to provide for your needs? How can you express thanksgiving to Him for His faithfulness to you?

-What is your greatest need right now? How can you place your complete trust in Jesus to meet this need and respond in faith as He does?

-Who is someone you need to share how your faith is helping you during this challenging time? How can you point them to find strength and help in Jesus?