

THE FAITH OF THE NOBLEMAN JOHN 4: 43-54

COMMENT ON TAKING OVER ANOTHER PERSON'S SERMON SERIES.

JOHN 4: 43-46A

JESUS SPENT TWO DAYS IN SAMARIA BEFORE HEADING NORTH FOR GALILEE. IN OUR RECENT BIBLE STUDY OF JOSHUA, IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT THE AREA OF GALILEE WAS ORIGINALLY THE INHERITANCE GIVEN TO THE ISRAELITE TRIBES OF ZEBULUN AND NAPHTALI. THE TEXT REMINDS US THAT THE LAST TIME JESUS WAS HERE; HE ALONG WITH HIS MOTHER AND DISCIPLES ATTENDED A WEDDING FEAST WHERE THE WINE RAN OUT. JOHN TOLD US IN CHAPTER TWO HOW JESUS THEN CHANGED WATER INTO WINE THUS SPARING EMBARRASSMENT ON THE PART OF THE FAMILY.

JOHN DOESN'T GIVE US THE REASON WHY JESUS RETURNED TO THIS AREA, BUT THE OTHER THREE GOSPELS DO. LOOKING AT MATTHEW'S GOSPEL (**MATTHEW 4:12-17**), IT SAYS THAT JESUS CAME PREACHING REPENTENCE. MARK'S GOSPEL ADDS A LITTLE MORE DETAIL. (**MARK 1:14B-15**) THIS ACCOUNT RECORDS FOUR THINGS THAT JESUS SAID WHILE HE WAS HERE:

- 1- THE TIME HAS COME. JESUS WASN'T REFERRING TO HIS DEATH HERE, BUT RATHER WAS STATING THAT THE DECISIVE TIME FOR GOD'S ACTION WAS HERE. THE TIME GOD'S PLAN FOR HIS SON'S PURPOSE HAD NOW COME AND HAD BEGUN.
- 2- THE KINGDOM IS NEAR. THE COMING OF CHRIST WAS TWO-FOLD, IT WAS FOR THE PURPOSE OF LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF ALL PEOPLE, BUT ALSO TO PREPARE THE BEGINNING OF HIS KINGDOM. THERE IS MUCH CONFUSION TODAY AS TO WHAT JESUS MEANT WHEN HE SPOKE OF HIS KINGDOM. BUT A STUDY THROUGH THE GOSPELS AND THE BEGINNING OF ACTS REVEALS THAT THE ETERNAL KINGDOM HE WAS REFERRING TO WAS THE CHURCH. THE PROPHET DANIEL, AS DAN HAD TOLD US IN OUR STUDY OF THAT GREAT BOOK, TOLD US THAT GOD'S KINGDOM WOULD COME AT THIS TIME AND THIS KINGDOM WOULD NEVER END.
- 3- REPENT. THIS WORD MEANS A LOT OF DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE. SOME PEOPLE THINK THAT THE WORD REPENT MEANS TO BE SORRY. WHILE WE SHOULD TRULY BE SORRY WHEN WE SIN, JUST BEING SORRY ISN'T WHAT THE WORD MEANS. IT LITERALLY MEANS TO ALTER OR CHANGE DIRECTIONS. IT MEANS TO CHANGE FROM LIVING FOR SINFUL PLEASURE AND TO START LIVING FOR GOD.

4- BELIEVE IN THE GOOD NEWS. BELIEF MEANS TO OBEY.

THIS IS WHAT JESUS WAS DOING IN GALILEE, AS WE PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OF IN JOHN'S GOSPEL. JESUS POINTS OUT THAT A PROPHET HAS NO HONOR IN HIS OWN COUNTRY. WHAT A STRANGE STATEMENT TO MAKE. YOU WOULD THINK THAT AMONG ONE'S OWN PEOPLE, A TRUE PROPHET OF GOD WOULD HAVE A PLACE OF HONOR AND RESPECT. BUT HONOR AND RESPECT WAS NOT WHAT MOST PROPHETS RECEIVED. JOHN CHAPTER ONE TOLD US THAT JESUS, WHO HIMSELF WAS A PROPHET, CAME TO HIS OWN BUT HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT. BUT JESUS WASN'T THE ONLY PROPHET OF GOD NOT RECEIVED BY THEIR OWN PEOPLE. I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A FEW MINUTES AND LOOK AT OTHER EXAMPLES TO HONE IN JESUS STATEMENT.

THE BIBLE RECORDS MANY PROPHETS WHO SUFFERED HARDSHIPS. HEBREWS CHAPTER 11 ALSO MENTIONS THE PERSECUTIONS THAT MANY OF THE PROPHETS ENDURED. TO HELP US UNDERSTAND WHAT JESUS MEANT, I'D LIKE US TO LOOK AT ONE EXAMPLE OF SCRIPTURE WHERE A PROPHET OF GOD WAS NOT HELD WITH HONOR.

1 KINGS 13-28 MICAIAH

THIS IS JUST ONE EXAMPLE OF A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR. ELIJAH, ELISHA, AMOS, HOSEA AND MANY OTHERS WERE NOT ACCEPTED AS MESSENGERS OF GOD, BUT RATHER WERE DISHONORED, IGNORED, MADE FUN OF, AND DISRESPECTED. JOSEPH, WHEN HE BEGAN TO BE A PROPHET, WAS MOST HATED BY HIS BROTHERS; JEREMIAH WAS MALIGNED BY THE MEN OF ANATHOTH (JER 11:21), PAUL BY HIS COUNTRYMEN THE JEWS; AND CHRIST'S NEAR KINSMEN SPOKE MOST SLIGHTLY OF HIM, JOHN 7:5.

JESUS FULLY UNDERSTOOD THAT PEOPLE'S HEARTS WERE STUBBORN IN HEARING AND RECEIVING THE WORD OF GOD, ESPECIALLY WITHIN ONE'S OWN FAMILY AND PEOPLE.

EXAMPLE: BEING CALLED "THE RELIGIOUS ONE" OF THE FAMILY

WE DON'T HAVE THE OLD OR THE NEW TESTAMENT PROPHETS AROUND TODAY, BUT WE HAVE THEIR WRITINGS. WE'RE IN NO DANGER OF PERSECUTING THOSE PROPHETS, BUT I DO BELIEVE THAT WE TODAY CAN SHOW DISHONOR TO THEM STILL. THE APOSTLES AND JESUS HELD THE PROPHETS IN HIGH REGARD. THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PROPHETS WERE THE MESSENGERS OF GOD AND THEY SPOKE THE WORDS OF GOD TO THE PEOPLE OF THEIR TIME. THEY ALL FACED REJECTION ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR DEVOTION TO GOD.

THE QUESTION WE MUST ASK OURSELVES, DO WE HOLD THE WORDS OF GOD WITH THE HONOR IT DESERVES?

JESUS SAID THAT A PROPHET WAS WITHOUT HONOR AMONG THEIR OWN PEOPLE. TODAY, WE ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD, BUT WHEN WE READ AND HEAR GOD'S WORD, HOW DO WE RECEIVE IT? IS IT WITH HONOR AND OBEDIENCE? OR DO WE LIKE SO MANY PEOPLE WHO HEARD THE PROPHETS, WHO HEARD THE WORDS OF JESUS AND WHO HEARD THE WORDS OF THE APOSTLES, REJECT WHAT IT SAYS?

IN ORDER FOR GOD'S WORD TO HAVE THE KIND OF EFFECT THAT IT IS SUPPOSED TO, WE MUST NOT SIMPLY BE HEARERS OF GOD'S WORD, WE MUST IN OBEDIENCE BE DOERS. (**JAMES 2:18, JAMES 4:17, JOHN 14:15**)

NONETHELESS, JESUS CAME TO GALILEE ANYWAY IN HOPES OF A HEARING AND BELIEVING PEOPLE. THE NEXT THING WE HAVE IS THAT THE PEOPLE WELCOMED JESUS. AT FACE VALUE, THIS SEEMS TO BE A GOOD THING HAVING PEOPLE WELCOMING THE LORD INTO THEIR TOWN. BUT THE REST OF VERSE 45 AND JESUS' STATEMENT IN VERSE 48 REVEAL A SECONDARY NOTION ON THE PART OF THE PEOPLE. THE PEOPLE OF GALILEE SAW THE THINGS JESUS DID AT THE PASSOVER FEAST, WHICH JOHN TOLD US ABOUT IN CHAPTER TWO WITH THE TURNING OVER THE TABLES AT THE TEMPLE. THESE PEOPLE ALSO KNEW THE MIRACULOUS SIGN THAT JESUS HAD ALREADY DONE WITH THE CHANGING OF THE WATER TO WINE. SO WHEN WE READ THEY WELCOMED HIM, WHAT IS IMPLIED HERE IS THAT THEY WERE NOT WELCOMING JESUS AS THE MESSIAH, RATHER THEY WANTED JESUS TO PERFORM FOR THEM.

THERE WAS JUST CURIOUS MYSTERY SURROUNDING WHO JESUS WAS AND HIS ABILITY TO DO MIRACULOUS THINGS, WHICH THE PEOPLE OF GALILEE WERE MORE INTERESTED IN HIS MIRACLES THAN WHO HE WAS.

THIS MAY HAVE BEEN TRUE ON THE PART OF MOST OF THE GALILEANS, BUT NOT FOR ONE MAN. THIS MAN WANTED A MIRACLE FROM JESUS, BUT NOT FOR THE REASON OF CURIOSITY OR ENTERTAINMENT. THIS MAN HAD A VERY PERSONAL NEED AND KNEW THAT ONLY JESUS COULD HELP HIM.

JOHN 4: 46B-50A

THIS MAN, IN THE STORY, WAS A ROYAL OFFICIAL FROM CAPERNAUM. THE TEXT DOESN'T SAY, BUT SINCE HE WAS IN THIS PART OF THE REGION IT IS BELIEVED THAT HE MAY HAVE BEEN AN OFFICER IN KING HEROD'S SERVICE. FOR WHOMEVER HE SERVED, BECAUSE OF HIS CAPACITY HE WOULD HAVE BEEN A MAN WHO HAD WEALTH, PRESTIGE, POWER, ALL OF THE FINEST LUXURIES WOULD HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE TO HIM. HE WOULD HAVE HAD THE CAPABILITY OF HIRING THE BEST MEDICAL STAFF TO HELP HIS SON. AGAIN, THE TEXT DOESN'T INDICATE ALL THAT HE DID TO HELP HIS SON GET BETTER, BUT WE DO KNOW FROM HIS ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS, THIS MAN WAS IN DESPERATION. HE WAS AT HIS WITS END AND HE CAME TO JESUS BEGGING THE LORD TO GO TO HIS HOUSE AND TO HEAL HIS SON.

THIS REMINDS US A VERY IMPORTANT POINT. SOMETIMES WE HAVE DIFFICULTY IN GIVING OUR SITUATIONS TO THE LORD. WE RELY ON OUR OWN ABILITIES, OUR OWN STRENGTHS, AND OUR WEALTH TO GET US OUT OF OUR DIFFICULTIES. EVEN AS CHRISTIANS, WE STRUGGLE WITH THE REALIZATION THAT WE NEED THE LORD'S HELP. USUALLY IT IS WHEN WE HAVE EXHAUSTED OUR OWN EFFORTS BEFORE WE REALLY LET GO OF OUR SITUATION AND TURN IT OVER TO THE LORD. WE KNOW BETTER, BUT WE OFTEN NEED TO BE REMINDED OF WHAT THE LORD TOLD ZERUBBABEL THROUGH THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH, **"NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER, BUT BY MY SPIRIT, SAYS THE LORD."** (ZECHARIAH 4:6)

AGAIN, WE SHOULD BE REMINDED OF THE WORDS OF PAUL IN HIS LETTER TO THE ROMANS, **"IN THE SAME WAY, THE SPIRIT HELPS US IN OUR WEAKNESS. WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT WE OUGHT TO PRAY FOR, BUT THE SPIRIT HIMSELF INTERCEDES FOR US WITH GROANS THAT WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS."** (ROMANS 8:26)

PAUL AGAIN REMINDS US OF HOW IT IS IN OUR WEAKEST MOMENTS THAT WE FIND THE LORD'S STRENGTH IN HIS LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS: **THAT IS WHY, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, I DELIGHT IN WEAKNESSES, IN INSULTS, IN HARDSHIPS, IN PERSECUTIONS, IN DIFFICULTIES. FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG."** (2 CORINTHIANS 12:10)

THIS NOBLEMAN, OR ROYAL OFFICIAL, UNDERSTOOD THIS AT HIS MOST DESPERATE TIME. PROBABLY AFTER MANY FAILURES, HE NOW SOUGHT HELP FROM THE LORD JESUS.

JESUS INITIAL ANSWER TO THIS MAN MAY SEEM HARSH. JESUS SAYS, **“UNLESS YOU PEOPLE SEE MIRACULOUS SIGNS AND WONDERS, YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE.”** WHILE JESUS SAID THIS IN ANSWER TO THE NOBLEMAN’S PLEA, I DON’T BELIEVE THAT HE WAS SPEAKING SOLELY TO THIS MAN. I BELIEVE HE SAID THIS TO ALL OF THE GALILEANS WHO HAD WELCOMED HIM INTO THE CITY. JESUS RESPONSE BRINGS TO MIND HOW THE SAMARITANS SIMPLY JUST BELIEVED IN JESUS BECAUSE OF HIS WORDS. THE SAMARITANS DIDN’T DEMAND OR REQUEST MIRACULOUS SIGNS. IT IS POSSIBLE, THAT JESUS REPLY TO THE NOBLEMAN EMCOMPASSED THIS DIFFERENCE. BUT SEE THE NOBLEMAN’S PERSISTENCE WHEN JESUS ANSWERS HIM, IN VERSE 4P HE SAYS, **“SIR, COME DOWN BEFORE MY CHILD DIES.”**

IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS, IT’S SUPPOSE TO HAPPEN THAT PARENTS FACE DEATH BEFORE THEIR CHILDREN. THIS DOESN’T ALWAYS HAPPEN. WE CAN’T MOVE ON IN OUR LESSON WITHOUT EMPHASIZING A KEY POINT FROM THIS STORY, DEATH COMES TO ALL PEOPLE AND MOST TIMES UNEXPECTEDLY. SADLY, THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO COME TO CHURCH AND DECIDE THAT THEY HAVE LOTS OF LIFE LEFT TO MAKE A DECISION TO FOLLOW THE LORD, BUT THERE ARE NO GUARANTEES ON ONES LIFE EXPECTANCY.

SOLOMON CALLED THIS LIFE A VAPOR. AND FOR THOSE WHO THINK THAT THERE’S PLENTY OF TIME TO REACH A DECISION TO BECOME A PART OF THE LORD’S FAMILY ARE IN ESSENCE PLAYING A TIME BOMB. IT IS BECAUSE THE CHURCH RECOGNIZES THIS THAT EACH WEEK WE OFFER ALL PEOPLE THE OPPORTUNITY TO RESPOND TO THE LORD’S INVITATION. AND MAY I ENCOURAGE US AS A CHURCH TO CONTINUE TO OFFER INVITATIONS EACH WEEK. AND LET ME ALSO ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO ARE STILL ON THE BUBBLE REGARDING THIS IMPORTANT STEP, DON’T WAIT UNTIL IT’S TOO LATE. WE LONG FOR YOU TO BE THE VITAL PART OF THE LORD’S CHURCH THAT ONLY YOU CAN BE. THE LORD GAVE HIS LIFE FOR YOU AND DESIRES YOUR LIFE FOR HIM.

THIS MAN PLEADED WITH JESUS BECAUSE HIS SON WAS AT DEATH’S DOOR. IT WAS NEARLY TOO LATE. BUT...IT WASN’T TOO LATE.

READ JOHN 4: 50-54

IT IS INTERESTING THAT THIS MAN WHO BEGGED JESUS TO COME TO HIS HOME WAS WILLING TO BELIEVE THE WORDS OF JESUS, “YOUR SON WILL LIVE.” THIS IS ONE OF THE FEW TIMES THAT HEALING CAME WITHOUT A PHYSICAL TOUCH BY JESUS. IN FACT, MOST OF THE MIRACULOUS HEALINGS RECORDED IN THE BIBLE ADD THAT THE PERSON DOING THE HEALING HAD PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH THE PERSON BEING HEALED.

ONCE JESUS TOLD THIS NOBLEMAN THAT HE COULD GO AND THAT HIS SON WOULD LIVE, THIS MAN DIDN'T CONTINUE TO BEG JESUS TO COME TO HIS HOUSE. HE SIMPLY BELIEVED THAT IF JESUS SAID HIS SON WOULD LIVE, THEN HE WOULD LIVE.

AND AS THE NOBLEMAN WAS RETURNING HOME, HIS SERVANTS WENT OUT TO MEET HIM AND TO TELL HIM THAT HIS SON SUDDENLY WAS BETTER. WHEN HE INQUIRED ABOUT THE TIME HIS FEVER LEFT THE BOY, HE WAS TOLD THE SEVENTH HOUR, OR BY OUR STANDARD OF TIME, ONE O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON, EXACTLY THE MOMENT JESUS HAD TOLD THE NOBLEMAN HIS SON WOULD LIVE.

THIS STORY REVEALS A FEW IMPORTANT LESSONS FOR US. FIRST, JESUS CAN HEAL FROM A DISTANCE. THE POWER OF SICKNESS AND DEATH IS NOT BEYOND THE REACH OF JESUS, EVEN WHILE HE IS IN HEAVEN. THERE ARE TIMES, I THINK, THAT EACH OF US GO THROUGH A PERIOD WHERE JESUS DOESN'T SEEM CLOSE TO US IN OUR TIMES OF DIFFICULTY. LET US REST ASSURED THAT JESUS ISN'T SO FAR OFF THAT HE DOESN'T KNOW OUR NEEDS. HE DOES. AND LET US NOT THINK THAT JESUS IS TOO FAR AWAY TO HELP US IN OUR NEEDS. IN FACT, WE HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT ALSO IS THERE TO HELP US THROUGH THE TOUGH TIMES.

THIS NOBLEMAN IS AN EXAMPLE IN FAITH. CONSIDERING HOW EARLY IT WAS IN JESUS' MINISTRY, I FIND IT SURPRISING THAT THIS NOBLEMAN NEVER QUESTIONED JESUS' ABILITY OR DOUBT JESUS' WORDS, HE SIMPLY JUST BELIEVED. THIS MAN WAS IN THE MIDST OF EXTREME CRISIS, AND YET HE DIDN'T HESITATE IN HIS BELIEF.

IS OUR FAITH THAT STRONG? DO WE SIMPLY BELIEVE IN THE WORDS OF JESUS AS THIS NOBLEMAN DID?

THE BIBLE HAS MUCH TO SAY ABOUT THE TYPE OF FAITH WE ALL SHOULD HAVE.

HEBREWS 11:1: "FAITH IS BEING SURE OF WHAT WE HOPE FOR AND CERTAIN OF WHAT WE DO NOT SEE."

ROMANS 10: 17: "FAITH COMES FROM HEARING THE MESSAGE, AND THE MESSAGE IS HEARD THROUGH THE WORD OF CHRIST."

ROMANS 3:22: "THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM GOD COMES THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, TO ALL WHO BELIEVE."

AND FINALLY...

2 CHRONICLES 20: 20: "HAVE FAITH IN THE LORD YOUR GOD AND YOU WILL BE UPHELD, HAVE FAITH IN HIS PROPHETS AND YOU WILL BE SUCCESSFUL."

INVITATION

"WHAT ARE YOU PUTTING YOUR TRUST IN? WHAT ARE YOU BASING YOUR SALVATION ON?"