

September 22, 2019

“A Journey of Faith”

Hebrews 11: 1 – 13; Matthew 21: 18 – 22; John 20: 30 – 31; **John 4:43-54 (Sermon)**

Several weeks ago we looked at Jesus’ first miraculous sign which was turning water into wine. Remember in the Gospel of John miracles are called signs. A sign is different from a miracle in that a sign emphasizes the significance of the act rather than the marvel of the act itself. Remember a sign points to the real thing. In this miracle Jesus demonstrates His unlimited power, presence, and knowledge and that His power, presence, and knowledge are not limited by time and /or space. This morning we will be looking at Jesus’ second miraculous sign (Verse 54) which is Jesus healing the royal official’s son. It is interesting that Jesus’ first and second miraculous sign took place in Cana of Galilee.

Verse 43 tells us that Jesus left Sychar in Samaria and went to Cana in Galilee. Remember many of the people in Sychar believed in Jesus after Jesus told the woman at the well ***“everything she ever did”*** (John 4:29). This explains why Jesus said, ***“A prophet has no honor in his own country”***. ***“The Galileans welcomed Jesus”*** because the Galileans were interested in seeing another one of Jesus’ miracles. (Verse 45) The Galileans did not welcome Jesus as the Messiah, but they welcomed Jesus as a miracle worker who could amaze them and entertain them. These people did not welcome Jesus because of who Jesus was; they welcomed Jesus for what Jesus could do for them! That was in direct contrast to the Samaritans in Sychar. John 4:42 says, ***“They said to the woman, we no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the World.”*** The people of Sychar begged Jesus to stay with them so Jesus stayed two more days there. (John 4:40) That was the same two days we read about in verse 43. And that is a question for each one of us this morning; *Are you here this morning to be entertained, or for Jesus to do something for you. Are you here because you want to worship Jesus? Do you want Jesus to change your circumstances or do you want Jesus to change you?*

In verse 46 we read: ***“A certain royal official”*** came to Jesus. Since it said ***“royal official”*** we assume that he was an officer in King Herod’s service. This means he was a man of authority and was used to giving orders and having people obey him. It also means that he was wealthy in material things. But when his son became very sick this official realized that he was totally dependent upon God. So when this royal official heard Jesus was in Cana he walked the 20 miles from Capernaum to Cana to ask Jesus to heal his son.

Verse 47 says; ***“He went to him and begged Jesus to come and heal his son”***. This royal official realized he was not in charge and there was nothing he could do to heal his son. He reached the point where he knew that no amount of money or power or authority was going to help. This man has been reduced to begging. You see our prayers are genuine when we come to The Lord with empty hands, admit our inability, surrender our will, beg for mercy, and plead for The Lord to help us.

Jesus said, ***“Unless you people see signs and wonders,”*** Jesus told him, ***“you will never believe”*** (John 4:48). The ***“you people”*** in verse 48 is plural so Jesus is referring to all those people listening, not just the royal official. Jesus rebuked this crowd in an attempt to get them to honestly think about why Jesus performed miracles. Jesus did not come to earth to entertain; Jesus came to earth save people from spiritual and eternal death. Every one of Jesus’ miracles were designed to prove Jesus was God in the flesh, to reveal more about Jesus’ attributes, and for people to believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

There is a difference in the royal official's request in verses 47 and 49. ***“He went to Jesus and begged Him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.”*** (Verse 47) Then in verse 49, ***“Sir, come down before my child dies.”*** Notice there is no request for healing in verse 49. I believe after this official heard Jesus' speak he believed Jesus was The Messiah because as soon as Jesus said, ***“You may go, your son will live”*** this official left for home. (Verse 50) I think this official wanted his son to meet Jesus before he died. This official took Jesus at His word and headed back to Capernaum. This official did not see the miracle happen, he just believed what Jesus said was going to happen. That is exactly what faith is – believing God's promises and acting on them before we experience the miracle. Hebrews 11:1 says, ***“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”***

Verse 51 says; ***“While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living.”*** Then this official realized that was the exact time Jesus said; ***“Your son will live.”*** Jesus spoke and the son who was 20 miles away was healed. This boy could have been 200 miles away or 2,000 miles away, it wouldn't matter because The Lord Jesus is everywhere and His power is unlimited. Jesus said the word and the official's son was healed!

Verse 53 tells us that this miraculous sign produced the result Jesus desired. ***“So he and all of his household believed.”***

This is a wonderful story, but what is the application for us?

First remember a sign is miraculous act that reveals a spiritual truth about God. This sign reveals the awesome power of God's Word. Jesus spoke and the official's son was healed. This sign also reveals that Jesus knows the future. ***“Your son will live”***.

Next this sign shows us Jesus is concerned about our situations. Jesus answers our prayers when we come to Jesus, we humble ourselves, we ask, we trust, and we believe.” Jesus said; ***“Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”*** (Matthew 21:21-22)

This miracle is important because it shows us as Christians that we do not need to go to a special healing service or to a *“faith-healing preacher”*. Whenever Jesus heals there is no mention of an *“anointed handkerchief”*, no requirement to make a donation to Jesus' ministry, there is no need to buy Jesus' tapes or CDs; there is no requirement to pay for a *“prayer of faith”*. Only Jesus can heal. We do not need someone to lay hands on us or to put anointing oil on us. We do not need the pastor to say a flowery prayer over us. We just need to come to Jesus in humility and with a repentant heart. We need to make our requests to Jesus, believe in the unlimited power of The Lord, have faith, and act on that faith. Faith is a gift that grows as we put our faith into practice.

We do not want to miss the progression of this official's faith. The progression of the official's faith is important because it is a picture of everyone's progression of faith. First a person needs to hear about Jesus. There is no indication that this official had never seen Jesus or heard Jesus speak prior to this. He had only heard what other people had said about Jesus. That is why it is so important for us to tell the people around us what our Jesus has done for us. Next there was a crisis in this official's life. His son was sick and close to death. You see, sometimes God uses troubles to get our attention. That is why we need to look at troubles as opportunities for a blessing. James 1:2 says; ***“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds.”*** Next, when this official came to the realization that he was unable to fix the problem and that he was totally dependent upon The Lord

he went to Jesus. This official walked 20 miles from Capernaum to Cana to see Jesus. We are not exhibiting faith when we make contingency plans. We show we are sincere when we humble ourselves before The Lord and admit that we are totally dependent upon The Lord. Verse 47 says, ***“He begged Jesus to come and heal his son.”*** Jesus gives us the key to having our prayers answered in verse 48; ***“We must believe that Jesus is God and that Jesus cares about us!”*** Belief is a verb, not a noun. We have to believe Jesus’ promises and we must act on those promises. Next, this official did not give up when Jesus rebuked the crowd. Instead this official took Jesus at His word and this official believed in Jesus. This official demonstrated his faith by leaving when Jesus said; ***“You may go. Your son will live”*** (Verse 50). This official believed Jesus’ words even though Jesus did not go to Capernaum with him. The official left and began the 7- 8 hour walk back home believing in a miracle he had not seen. The official’s faith was confirmed when his servants met him with the news that his son was healed (Verse 52). The purpose of this miracle was accomplished since; ***“this official and all of his household believed.”*** (Verse 53) Remember Jesus performs miracles today so that we will know He is God, so we will believe in Him, and so we will tell others what The Lord has done for us!

This morning you may feel like your faith is insufficient for a miracle in your life. But that is ok because this account should encourage you in your walk of faith. Remember this official did not have much faith when he began his walk of faith. His view of Jesus was limited, but he took the first step. This official’s faith increased as he listened to Jesus. Then he took the next step. Then his journey of faith was complete when he shared his faith with his family.

The account of Jesus healing the official’s son shows us how much we are dependent upon Jesus. It was recorded to encourage each of us in our walk of faith. John 20:30 -31 says; ***“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is The messiah, The Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”***

To me one of the saddest verses in The Bible is Matthew 13:58; ***“Jesus did not many miracles there because of their lack of faith.”***

God’s word to us today challenges all of us to bring our burdens to Jesus, to claim Jesus’ promises, believe in Jesus’ unlimited power, and to step out in faith. God’s word to us also challenges us to tell other people how The Lord is working in our life.

AMEN

September 29, 2019

“You Were Chosen To Bear Fruit”

Galatians 5: 16 – 26; 2nd Peter 1: 5 – 8; Matthew 7 15 – 23; **John 15: 1- 17 (Sermon)**

Jesus often used parables and allegories to describe Himself and our relationship with Him. In this allegory God The Father is the gardener, Jesus is the true vine, and Jesus’ disciples are the branches. In this allegory Jesus is explaining our relationship with Him, our dependence upon Him, and our responsibility to Him.

In The Old Testament Israel is frequently symbolized as a grape vine. Grapes symbolized Israel’s fruitfulness in doing God’s work on earth. (Psalm 80:8; Isaiah 5:7, Jeremiah 2:21& Hosea 10:1). So when Jesus said; ***“I Am The True Vine”*** and ***“I Am The Vine”*** (Verses 1 & 5) the Jews knew Jesus was claiming to be Israel’s Messiah. A vine serves two main interrelated functions. The vine is the source of life and the vine is the source of fruit. The vine sends life giving sap to the branches so that the branches can produce fruit.

Verse 2 tells us that God The Father, the gardener: ***“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will bear more fruit.”*** And in verse 6: ***“If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire, and burned.”*** The gardener removes all dead branches and he prunes the live branches so that they will produce more fruit. So what we have here is the clear teaching that God is in control of the vineyard and it is God’s desire for us to produce fruit. Jesus gives us life and the ability to produce fruit. The gardener gets the praise when fruit is produced.

In verse 5 Jesus clearly says, ***“you are the branches.”*** Branches are an extension of the vine. A branch receives life from the vine. A branch produces the fruit consistent with the kind of vine it is attached to. The life is in the vine and a branch that is cut off from the vine will die. A branch has no root. And since an unconnected branch has no life, a branch can not bear fruit by itself. There is no life and there is no fruit apart from Jesus! Jesus clearly says our purpose as a branch is to bear fruit. That is why God created us, that is why Jesus chose us, and that is why we were saved.

The vine has two kinds of branches; branches that bear fruit and branches that do not bear fruit. The branches that bear fruit are genuine believers. However, there are sinful and worldly attitudes in all of us that need to be pruned. The branches that do not bear fruit are those people who have separated themselves from the vine. They may profess to believe in Jesus but since they are not producing fruit that is an indication that genuine salvation has never taken place. Remember Jesus was teaching The 12 Disciples and Judas Iscariot was with them at this time. Sin blocks the life giving sap from flowing from the vine into the branches.

As disciples our responsibility to Jesus is clearly stated in verse 4 ***“Remain in me.”*** That message to remain in Jesus runs all through this passage. The relationship between the branch and the vine can be summed up in one word: dependence. We all are dependent upon Jesus to supply life to us. As we receive spiritual nourishment from Jesus fruit is produced. As Christians we are simply an extension of Jesus’ life. We must think according to that truth, we must act according to that truth and our whole lives must be lived in the light of that truth.

Now what does it mean to remain in Christ?

- Remaining in Christ means *“don’t leave”*. We are to remain in Jesus’ presence all day / every day.
- Remaining in Christ means we obey all of Jesus’ commands. In verse 10 Jesus says ***“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love...”*** (John 15:10) If we really love The Lord we will want to

obey all of His commandments. When we disobey Jesus we chose to remove ourselves from The Lord's presence and our sin blocks the flow of God's Spirit into our life. The way we remain in Jesus and in Jesus' love is to obey all of His commandments.(Verse 10)

- Remaining in Jesus means my first priority is for spiritual blessings not physical blessings. We want what God wants for us. Our priority is no longer for worldly attention or selfish ambition, because that is not God's goal for us. We pray according to Jesus' will rather than my own will. Remaining in Jesus means we seek The Lord's approval more than anyone else's approval.
- Remaining in Jesus means we know we are dependant on Jesus and we know we are dependent upon The Father to prune the things in our lives that are preventing us from being more fruitful. We strive to yield ourselves wholly to Jesus. We know our weakness and we are driven to prayer.
- Remaining in Jesus means loving each other (Verse 12)
- Remaining in Jesus means we live to honor and bring glory to God.

A branch that is not attached to the vine is useless!

So exactly what is the fruit that we as Christians are expected to produce? First the fruit that Christians are to produce is obedience to Jesus. Jesus said; ***"If you love me you will obey what I command."*** (John 14:15) And in John 15:17 ***"This is my commandment: love each other."***

Secondly the fruit that Christians are expected to produce is other Christians. One of the signs of life is that life reproduces itself. Matthew 28:19 is Jesus' great commission to believers; ***"Go and make disciples of all nations..."*** And in Acts 1:8 Jesus said; ***"You shall be my witnesses..."***

Thirdly the fruit that Christians are expected to produce is The Fruit Of The Spirit which we read about in Galatians 5:22 & 23. ***"... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."***

Without a doubt the fruit Christians are expected to produce is spiritual fruit. The New Testament describes fruit as Godly attributes (Galatians 5:22-23), righteous behavior (Philippians 1:11), living as Jesus lived (1st John 2: 5 – 6), loving one another (1st John 4:11 – 13), praise (Hebrews 13:15), as well as leading other people to faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 1:13-16). The only way we can lead someone to Christ is for our lives to reflect the holy attributes of Jesus. This is clear in Matthew 7:16-18. ***"By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit."*** When we are exhibiting Godly attributes in our daily lives we will be fruitful and unbelievers will be attracted to Jesus Christ.

The question for each of us this morning is; *am I connected to Jesus* **or** have I become disconnected from the vine? The way we know that we are connected to Jesus is that we are producing the kind and the amount of fruit that God desires? In verse 8, Jesus said, ***"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."***

In this passage of scripture Jesus tells us there are four levels of bearing fruit; no fruit, some fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. So the next question for each of us is; *"how fruitful are you?"*

Then in verse 16 Jesus talks about His will for our lives. John 15:16 ***"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last."*** God designed each and every one of us to be fruitful. Jesus expects each one of us to be fruitful!

The next question for each of us this morning is; *are you bearing the fruit God designed you to produce?* The good news is we do not have to work at producing fruit. All we have to do is stay connected to Jesus and to allow Jesus to work through us. And when we allow Jesus to work through us we will produce large crops of fruit that are pleasing to Almighty God.

In this allegory Jesus also list some wonderful promises to those who remain in Him.

Jesus said ***“If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”*** (John 15:7) The conditions are remaining in Jesus and Jesus’ words remaining in us. When we are spiritually alive in Jesus, and Jesus’ words remain in us, we will pray according God’s will, and then our prayers will be fruitful.

The next promise is producing much fruit. In verse 8 Jesus said; ***“By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit....”*** (John 15:8) The foundational and essential fruit of abiding in Jesus is a Godly character. Remember ***“the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”*** (Galatians 5:22-23). As Christians we are called to display the character of Jesus at all times and in all places. When we remain in Jesus we will produce fruit and that glorifies God. Remember your habits, your temper, your words, your attitude, and a cheerful disposition are controlled by faith in the sovereignty of God over each and every circumstance.

The third promise of remaining in Jesus in this passage is joy. Jesus said; ***“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”*** (John 15: 11) Jesus wants to share His joy with us. The key to experience joy is having our lives intertwined with Jesus.

The fourth promise of remaining in Jesus is the ability to love one another. Jesus said; ***“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”*** (John 15: 12) Jesus loves you unconditionally and sacrificially. We can only love other people the way Jesus loves us as the life and the character of Jesus flows through us by the power of The Holy Spirit.

The fifth promise is we are Jesus’ friends. Jesus said; ***“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”*** (John 15: 15) It is incredible that the creator and ruler of the universe wants to be our friend.

The purpose of a vineyard is to bear grapes, and that is exactly the point Jesus is making in this passage of scripture. God had expected The Nation of Israel to bear luscious, rich, beautiful, tasty grapes, but the only grapes He got from them were sour, rotten, stinking, and tasteless. When God looks at your life and mine, God expects to see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control exhibited in every aspect of our lives every day.

Imagine how much different our lives would become if we included Jesus in every activity of our day. Every event in our lives would become holy and an opportunity to bring glory to Almighty God. In itself there is nothing spiritual about looking after a patient, teaching a class, spending time with your children, or assisting a customer. But all of these activities can become sacred events when you do them for the glory of Jesus Christ.

God’s word to us this morning is crystal clear. Jesus chose us to be His disciples and when we chose to accept Jesus’ offer of eternal life Jesus expects us to bear fruit. So the question is; *“Are you producing Godly fruit that is pleasing to Almighty God?”* Remember Jesus said; you will be fruitful when you are connected to Jesus, you keep His Word in your heart, and you obey all of Jesus’

commands. When we are producing Godly fruit the unsaved people around us will see Godly attributes in our daily life and they will be attracted to Jesus Christ. *Jesus chose you to bear fruit.*
AMEN