

TAKING JESUS AT HIS WORD

Faith does not require miraculous signs and wonders -- Faith trusts what Jesus says.

John 4:46-54

TEXT: *Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour." Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his household believed. This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

In the early years of the Lutheran Reformation, Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, a Protestant reformer from Switzerland debated the Bible's teaching on the Lord's Supper. There was the hope that some sort of agreement could be reached that might unite all churches that had broken away from the Roman Catholic Church. For Ulrich Zwingli, the bread and wine used in Holy Communion was merely a representation, or a symbolic element of Jesus' body and blood. For Martin Luther, the words of Jesus, "This IS my body; this IS my blood, could only be read and believed exactly as Jesus had spoken those words.

While Zwingli tried to explain what Jesus said, Martin Luther simply believed and trusted what Jesus said, and so to this day true Lutherans have what Jesus said is given us in the Lord's Supper, namely, his true body and blood received by the eater of bread and wine, for the forgiveness of sins. Lutherans call the teaching of this truth of the Lord's Supper, the doctrine of The Real Presence as opposed to the false teaching of those Protestant churches who teach what they call "Representation."

This is a mark of true saving faith, as today's sermon text points out, that this faith is TAKING JESUS AT HIS WORD. Faith does not require miraculous signs and wonders. Faith trusts what Jesus says.

Faith does not require miraculous signs and wonders. That fact was the basis for Jesus' complaint about the people throughout Galilee. *Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."* People were following Jesus because they had seen his miracle at that wedding feast in Cana where he had changed water into the best of wine. But to follow Jesus because he was sent by God to be man's Savior from sin, death and the power of the devil was not in their hearts or minds. They wanted the miracles and signs to assure them that God was with them in Jesus.

This certain "royal official," for example begs Jesus to come and heal his son. Were it not that his son was sick, would he have bothered to come to Jesus, to worship him, and to hear his word? Did it take a dying boy to cause him to make the 7-8 mile trek to where Jesus was preaching? Since it was HIS boy and not another's, did that make the humiliation of being a royal official begging publicly easier? *Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."* YOU PEOPLE... How could Jesus speak with such derisiveness and contempt to this poor father, this royal official? YOU PEOPLE! *Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders... you will never believe.* Jesus had to speak this way because faith that is based on miraculous signs is no faith at all.

Are we any different? Since all humans have inherited a sinful nature, we can say that all humanity is united by this so-called "faith" in Jesus that actually is not faith at all. The substance of this false faith is based on sight and sound, touch and feeling. Many today claim to be Christian only because of how it makes them feel about themselves and others. They use Jesus as the example of how we are to live in order to feel right

before God. Many religions can claim this teaching about faith and it sounds godly and true. Be they Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, Seventh Day Adventist (all religious cults), or Catholic, or Protestant, faith that has its foundation on what visible proofs that touch our lives is no faith at all. Since all have a sinful nature, even good Lutherans like us will wrestle with that innermost sinful desire that often causes us to say things like, "If God would only do this or do that..." when what God has done for our eternal life salvation has already been accomplished in that one single act that was carried out on the cross and substantiated by the empty tomb of Christ.

In Hebrews 11 it is written: ***Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.*** For twenty-five years, old Abraham and Sarah hoped for the birth of their son, Isaac, not just to have a son, but it was through Isaac that the Savior would come. Then, when after some 20-30 years later God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, the Bible tells us that it was because Abraham believed that the Lord would keep his promise of a Savior coming from Isaac and was able and willing to carry out that bloody deed. God knew Abraham would do it because he had SAVING FAITH in the Savior Jesus who was yet to come, so God stopped Abraham seconds before the knife cut Isaac's throat.

Miracles do happen as today's Scripture lesson points out because God does answer the prayers of those who believe in Jesus. But faith is not based upon God's answer to our prayers. It trusts what Jesus says.

Faith trusts what Jesus says, without question. When God created Adam and Eve, one of the blessings that he gave them was an altar in their home where they could worship. It was called "The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." He told them: ***You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.*** Ge 2 Many people do not understand that this was a happy tree and commandment for these two people who were in God's image, in perfect harmony with God and full of love for him. Their hearts were bursting with love and the desire to show their love for him in some way. This tree was a way to express their love and trust in God's goodness toward them.

Note, however, that Adam and Eve had absolutely no desire to ask God why? Why can't we eat this fruit? What do you mean that we will die? What is death? None of these questions were necessary or even considered in those hearts that had perfect love and trust for God's goodness and wisdom. They trusted God's word without question. That's what saving faith does with God's Word. Though we are sinners, we know Jesus who demonstrated his love for us by his death on the cross and the promise that we know have forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

Unlike Adam and Eve, we know have a sinful nature. After they sinned, that original sin was passed on to all who have ever been conceived. It is inherited from our fathers and the Bible calls it "The Old Adam." Even though we have saving faith in Jesus, our Old Adam still plagues us with all kinds of doubts and distrust. What wretched people we are! Who will save us from our sinful nature and its sins of doubt? Paul simply declares what our saving faith believes: ***Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*** Ro 7

While so many sought Jesus only for the signs and miracles, this man didn't. The Bible says: ***Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, ... you will never believe."*** ***The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."*** ***Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live."*** ***The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living.*** ***The man took Jesus at his word*** – evidence of his saving faith. Another sign of his faith in Jesus is that he went home and instructed his household about who Jesus really is, and the Bible says: ***So he and all his household believed...*** Saving faith also instructs others to know and trust the word of Jesus.

This is the first and foremost thing anyone can learn to do: to take Jesus at his word even though it seems that he is far away, aloof to our sufferings and troubles. Because if it is true, and it is, that God loved us so much as to send his Son to take away our sins with his own suffering and death, will God not also along with Jesus give us all things? Yes, he will! So let us ever read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the blessed Scriptures, for ourselves and for all whom God has given us to raise as children and family.

Let us ever be among those who take Jesus at his word and we will ever be blessed, now and for eternity. Amen