

I Need a Miracle:
Desperate Times Call for Desperate Measures
John 4:46-54

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Dr. Steve Horn

Text Introduction: There are seven events in the Gospel of John that are commonly referred to as the 7 Signs of John: Water into wine, Healing of a nobleman's son, Healing of a man at the Pool of Bethesda, Feeding the 5,000, Walking on the water in the midst of a storm, Healing a blind man, and Raising Lazarus from the dead. We would call these miracles; John called them signs. The word sign is a technical term in the Gospel of John that refers specifically to the 7 miracles that serve to point people to belief in Jesus. These miracles are the subject of our study as we begin this New Year. Last week, we read the account of the first sign—Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding. Although that sounds a little odd to us, the miracle helps us to see that when we have a need that seems impossible, we can call on Jesus. He can do all things.

Let me remind you of our working definition of a miracle. Miracles are those things that can only be described by the phrase "*God did it!*"

The miracles of Jesus confirm who He is, what He said about Himself, and what others said about Him.

Today we consider a second miracle—a healing miracle. It's the kind of miracle that many are asking for still today.

Text: ⁴⁶ Then He went again to Cana of Galilee, where He had turned the water into wine. There was a certain royal official whose son was ill at Capernaum. ⁴⁷ When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and pleaded with Him to come down and heal his son, for he was about to die.

⁴⁸ Jesus told him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe."

⁴⁹ "Sir," the official said to Him, "come down before my boy dies!"

⁵⁰ "Go," Jesus told him, "your son will live." The man believed what Jesus said to him and departed.

⁵¹ While he was still going down, his slaves met him saying that his boy was alive. ⁵² He asked them at what time he got better. "Yesterday at seven in the morning the fever left him," they answered. ⁵³ The father realized this was the very hour at which Jesus had told him, "Your son will live." Then he himself believed, along with his whole household.

⁵⁴ This, therefore, was the second sign Jesus performed after He came from Judea to Galilee.

Introduction

There are some things that are similar in this miracle to the miracle that we considered last week.

- There is a need that is impossible to solve in human strength. In the first miracle, the wine had run out. In the second, there is a sick son.
- In both, Jesus is asked to intervene.
- In both, Jesus issued a rebuke. In the first miracle, the rebuke was in regard to His “time having not yet come.” In this second miracle, the rebuke was in reference to the seeking of a sign.
- In each, the miracle is received with some action being requested by Jesus. In the first, Jesus asked that water pots be filled. In the second, the official is told to go home believing that his son had been healed.
- Finally, in both miracles, belief in Jesus is the result of the miracle.

While there are these similarities, there are also distinct differences.

- The official’s need was greater. I think all will agree that wine running out is not as great a need as a sick son. One brought public humiliation; the other need was going to bring incomprehensible grief and loss.
- The official’s need was urgent. The official believed that his son was at the point of death. “Come before my boy dies.”
- The official’s need was personal. This was the official’s own son.

As I prayed over this passage this week, one word kept coming to mind.

The miracle in one word: Desperation

There is a lot of desperation in this scene.

- Certain royal official whose son was ill—Royal officials were usually in control, but not this time. Like the song “I Need a Miracle” says:

Well no matter who you are
And no matter what you've done
There will come a time
When you can't make it on your own
And in your hour of desperation
Know you're not the only one

- From Capernaum—He was about 20 miles from Cana, and it appears in the timing delay of the getting back, that he walked this distance.
- He pleaded, and when rebuked, simply said, “Come before my boy dies.”
- He went back home when Jesus said his boy would live. What else could he have done?

Here is the point: At some point, like the royal official, we will come to a place where our money, our power, or our position will do us no good. Here is the authenticity of desperation—We have no other

hope. Money can't buy it, position can't authorize it, and intellect can't solve it. This is total dependence upon the Lord, and that dependence forces an act of desperation. And, that's a good thing.

George Mueller, a preacher of another generation said, "Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins when man's power ends."

Here is what happens:

- **Desperation prompts the urgency.**

What makes you desperate?

- **Desperation produces the obedience.**

To this point in the Gospel, it could be said that "Seeing is believing." But, with this story, faith is brought to another level. Faith is not always seeing, but just believing. This comes full circle at the end of the Gospel when Thomas says, "I will not believe unless I see." Jesus granted Thomas' need, but then adds, "Blessed are those who believe without seeing."

The official goes his way without seeing. In his desperation, what else is he going to do? But, I caution, don't let our obedience end at the point of desperation.

- **Desperation propels the thanksgiving.**

Why do I say he was thankful? Though silent in this text, I believe that he immediately told his family and household what happened. He inquired of the time. I then imagine that he said something like this: "Do I have a story for you?" The whole household believed.

- **Desperation in this story parallels salvation's necessity.**

The royal official's desperation and dependence is the same necessary for salvation. In the beatitudes, Jesus said, "Blessed is the poor in spirit." We say to God, "I have nothing. I am completely dependent upon you."

Miss Charlotte Eliott, single, in her 30's, member of a prominent English family, was stricken with illness so that she was basically an invalid. It was the 1830's. Her pain seemed to come to a point on the eve before a fundraiser that her pastor brother had put together to raise money to send other preacher kids to school. She wallowed around in her own self-pity thinking about her own uselessness. Though having grown up in a Christian home, she had never really given herself to God. In that moment, God met her. She penned the poem that would later become the text of the hymn "Just as I Am." In her self-described uselessness, she realized that there was but one way to come to the Savior—Just as I am."

What about you? Would you be willing to come to the end of yourself today?